

Rolling Stone

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SPECIAL REPORT

Teenage Jihad

Inside the World
of American Kids
Seduced by **ISIS**

By Janet Reitman

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Taylor**
BACK
TO FOLK

**Alabama
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WILD
SECOND
ALBUM

**Mad
Men's
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**Ad-
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LIFE
AFTER
THE
BEASTIE
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**Van
Morrison**
NEW DUETS

**Kendrick
Lamar**

Being Ringo

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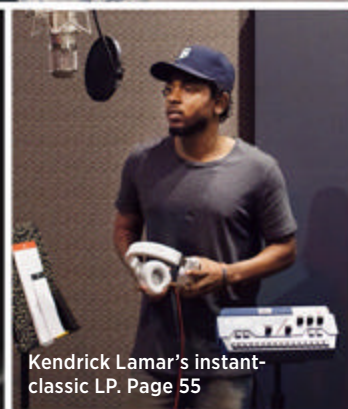
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ON THE COVER Ringo Starr photographed in Delray Beach, Florida, on February 19th, 2015, by **Mark Seliger**.

Jacket and shirt by John Varvatos.

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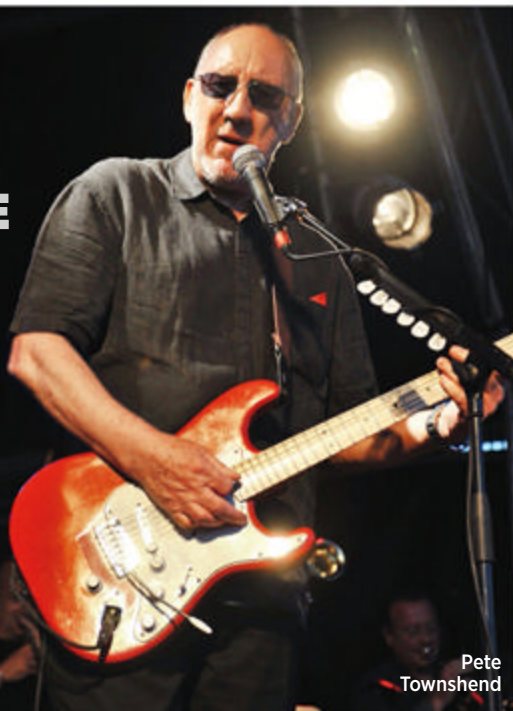
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LIVE

GETTING IN TUNE: THE WHO LIVE IN LONDON

The Who are gearing up for a worldwide 50th-anniversary tour that will highlight rarely played songs like "A Quick One, While He's Away" and "I Can See for Miles" next to hits like "Pinball Wizard." Read our overnight report of the kickoff at London's O2 Arena, and stay tuned for ongoing coverage on RollingStone.com.



Pete Townshend

M.I.A.



Q&A

CATCHING UP WITH M.I.A.

We spoke with the British rapper about the 10-year anniversary of her debut LP, *Arular*, where things stand with Diplo – and her beef with Oprah.



VIDEO

Action Bronson

MY CRAZIEST HIP-HOP GIGS

Queens-born rapper Action Bronson is known for his stage antics, from old-school crowd-surfing to tossing bags of weed into the audience. Watch him talk about his wildest shows.



LIST

Rodriguez

A 'FAST' LIFE IN 10 MOVIES

As *Fast and Furious* star Michelle Rodriguez gears up for the release of the seventh – and possibly last – film in the franchise, she runs down 10 of her all-time favorite movies.



Kelly Clarkson

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LOVE LETTERS
& ADVICE



Viva Madonna!

I ACTUALLY SQUEAKED LIKE my 14-year-old self when I saw Madonna on the cover ["Live to Tell," RS 1230]. Thanks to Brian Hiatt for the insightful interview. I devoured every word. Twice.

*Kathryn Rinker
McCall, ID*

I'M A LONGTIME MADONNA fan. Hiatt's informed and respectful interview style produced an unusually rich profile on the Material Girl, both juicy and thought-provoking.

Adam Yee, via the Internet

I WAS TALKING ABOUT MUSIC at a queer youth camp, Camp Ten Trees, and two teenage girls asked, "Who's Madonna?" It made me feel old, but I told them that Katy Perry and Lady Gaga wouldn't be here if it wasn't for Madonna. Thank you for putting Ms. Ciccone on the cover – maybe now other young girls will finally get to know the Queen of Pop.

Nadja Dee Witherbee, Seattle

AS EXCITED AS I WAS TO read the Madonna interview, I was also confused by some of her comments. She says people don't dare judge others for being gay or black, but they feel free to talk about her age. Gays and blacks are bashed every day. What rock does she live under?

Krys Gilbert, Twin Falls, ID

Canada's Dirty Export

In RS 1230, Tim Dickinson wrote about how Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper has tied his country's economy to dirty-energy exports ["Canada's Crude Awakening"]. Exhorting Canadian voters to demand new leadership on climate, 350.org's Cameron Fenton wrote, "It took Dickinson skewering Harper and his tar-sands agenda in ROLLING STONE just to get this conversation into the public light." Our readers responded.

KUDOS TO TIM DICKINSON for calling out Stephen Harper on his destructive economic and environmental policies. Harper has also muzzled government scientists from even talking about climate change and closed scientific libraries across the country under the guise of fiscally responsible "cost-cutting." Canadians are ready for their own "Hope and Change" moment.

Mike Jacques

Richmond Hill, Ontario

DICKINSON WRITES, "Championing dirty oil meant Harper had to undermine traditional Canadian values – including environmental stewardship and international collaboration." I hope Canada comes to its senses about this devastating policy.

*Maria Estan
Via the Internet*

ACCORDING TO GREEN-peace, the biggest threat to our climate is coal. U.S.-mined coal has been one of

the largest sources of carbon emissions. The oil sands and the Keystone pipeline are an easier political target. We must solve the climate-change crisis, but people who heat their houses with coal shouldn't throw tar.

*Richard Lewis
Vancouver*



CANADA HAS TAKEN A page from the American playbook – one that counsels that all natural resources are for sale and damn the consequences.

*William Kendrickson
Via the Internet*

STEPHEN HARPER BEGAN his career in the mailroom of an oil company? You can't make this stuff up.

*Shelly Craig
Via the Internet*

Injustice in Philly

PAUL SOLOTAROFF'S HARROWING account of Tony Wright's tragic ordeal was on my mind weeks after I read it ["Why Is This Man Still in Jail?" RS 1230]. I hope Wright sues the Philadelphia Police Department after being incarcerated for a crime he didn't commit. As massive an injus-

tice as this was, Wright is very lucky in one key respect: Many other people wrongly serving life sentences don't have access to competent legal counsel or to the Innocence Project.

*Edward Cunningham
Via the Internet*

AS AN EDITOR FOR A college newspaper in East Texas, I was massively inspired by So-

lotaroff's reporting. I hope that someday my own writing can help dig the unfortunate out of the deep holes that those above them have shoved them into.

Andrew Burnes, Commerce, TX

Rock's Wild Side

I'M FROM DETROIT AND I like Kid Rock's music ["The Killer Inside Kid Rock," RS 1230]. But the article was very disturbing to read. Kid Rock's sadistic tendencies – finding the suffering of animals pleasurable or funny – isn't cool. Kid, you lost me.

Karen Maslanik, Seattle

I ENJOYED THE KID ROCK article. I found his snarky crack about unions interesting. I guess Bob Ritchie doesn't understand that union members probably made up the majority of the customers his father sold cars to.

*Tom J. Intihar
Brooklyn Park, MN*

Noel Gallagher

I'VE NEVER HEARD OF OASIS, or Noel Gallagher [Q&A, RS 1230], but Simon Vozick-Levinson's refreshing interview contained more rock & roll attitude than the whole issue. I especially enjoyed Noel's reaction to hearing that some consider Taylor Swift a talented songwriter. "Who says that? You're fucking lying!" Anyone who doesn't like Noel Gallagher is an idiot.

Steven Critchen, Baja, CA

PLEASE INTERVIEW NOEL Gallagher every issue. Way to keep it real, Noel.

Preston T. Joyner, via the Internet

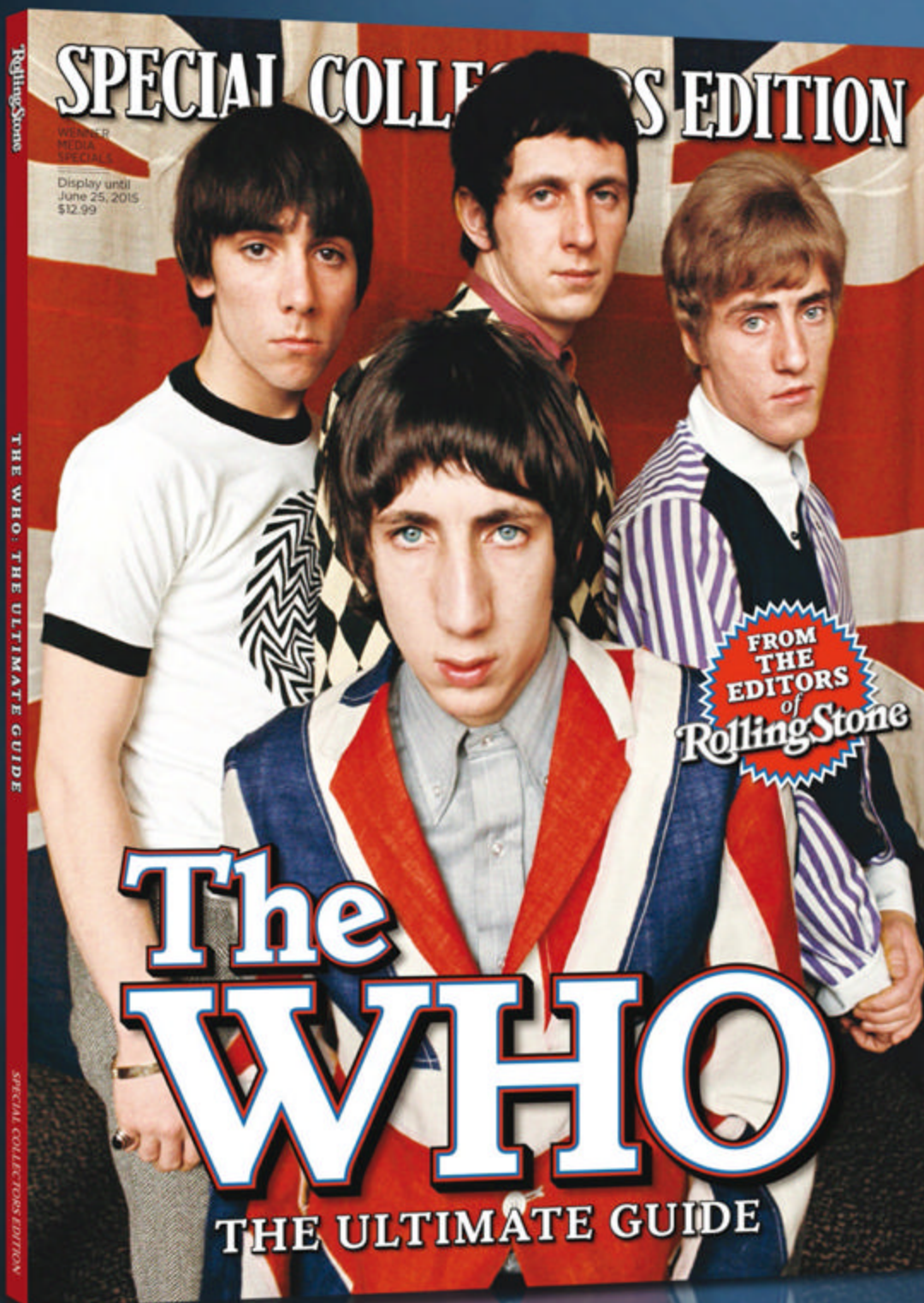
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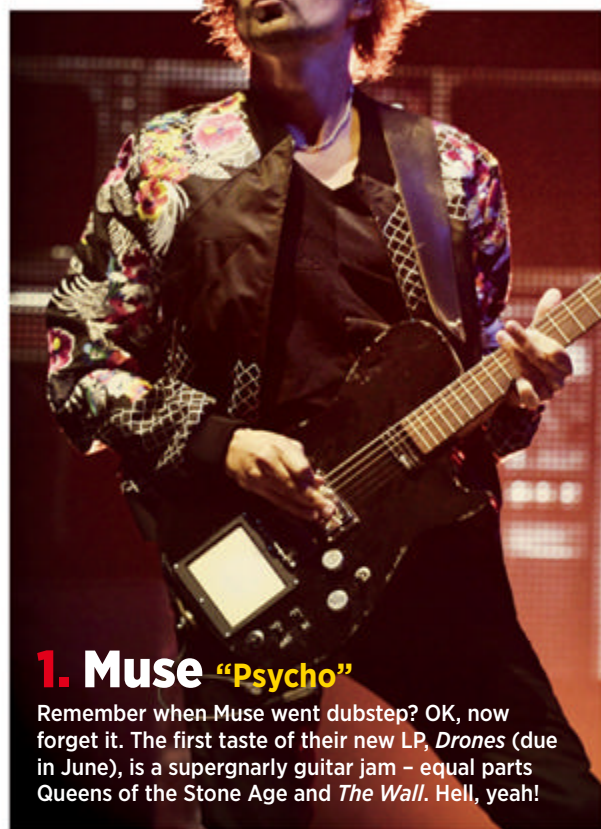


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THE PLAYLIST

OUR FAVORITE ALBUMS AND VIDEOS RIGHT NOW



1. Muse "Psycho"

Remember when Muse went dubstep? OK, now forget it. The first taste of their new LP, *Drones* (due in June), is a supergnarly guitar jam – equal parts Queens of the Stone Age and *The Wall*. Hell, yeah!



4. Sufjan Stevens "Carrie & Lowell"

The title track from Stevens' beautiful return to folk music is a sweet, hymnlike ode to his late mother. Three of the most moving minutes you'll experience in 2015.



7. Grimes "Realiti"

The Canadian singer released this ridiculously fun dance-pop dream as a one-off gift to fans (calling it a demo from a "lost album" she worked on in 2013) – it's among the best, catchiest things she's ever done.

5. Kendrick Lamar "King Kunta"

This boastful bounce is a stand-out on Lamar's new LP: "Bitch, where was you when I was walking?/Now I run the game, got the whole world talking!"



6. Björk "Lionsong" video

One of the most wrenching moments on Björk's *Vulnicura* gets a clip to match: The singer bares her broken heart – literally, in microscopic detail – and rocks a costume that makes her look like a Martian dandelion. Freakily great.

2. Van Morrison "Some Peace of Mind"

Van the Man's new duets album is full of unexpected gems – like this powerful take on a forgotten 1991 tune, featuring soulful vocals by the late Bobby Womack.



3. Natalie Imbruglia "Instant Crush"

This song was a major highlight on Daft Punk's 2013 album when Julian Casablancas sang it. Imbruglia's poppy cover makes us fall head over heels for our old "Crush" all over again.

EXPERT OPINION



Boz Scaggs

The singer – whose new album, *A Fool to Care*, hits March 31st – tells us what he really thinks of five tunes.

OLD

Bob Dylan

"Tight Connection to My Heart"

Pretty chords. I hadn't heard this one. It sounds disco-y, but Dylan's asking a profound question: Has anyone seen his love?

Steely Dan

"The Fez"

What a groove. My God! You could drive an 18-wheeler down that groove. It's just immense.

NEW

U2

"Every Breaking Wave"

At first, it sounds like the Police's "Every Breath You Take." Then they go into that big, anthemic, monumental U2 thing. It's part of what they do best.

Carly Rae Jepsen

"I Really Like You"

Sounds like mall-girl pop to me. Cold and desolate.

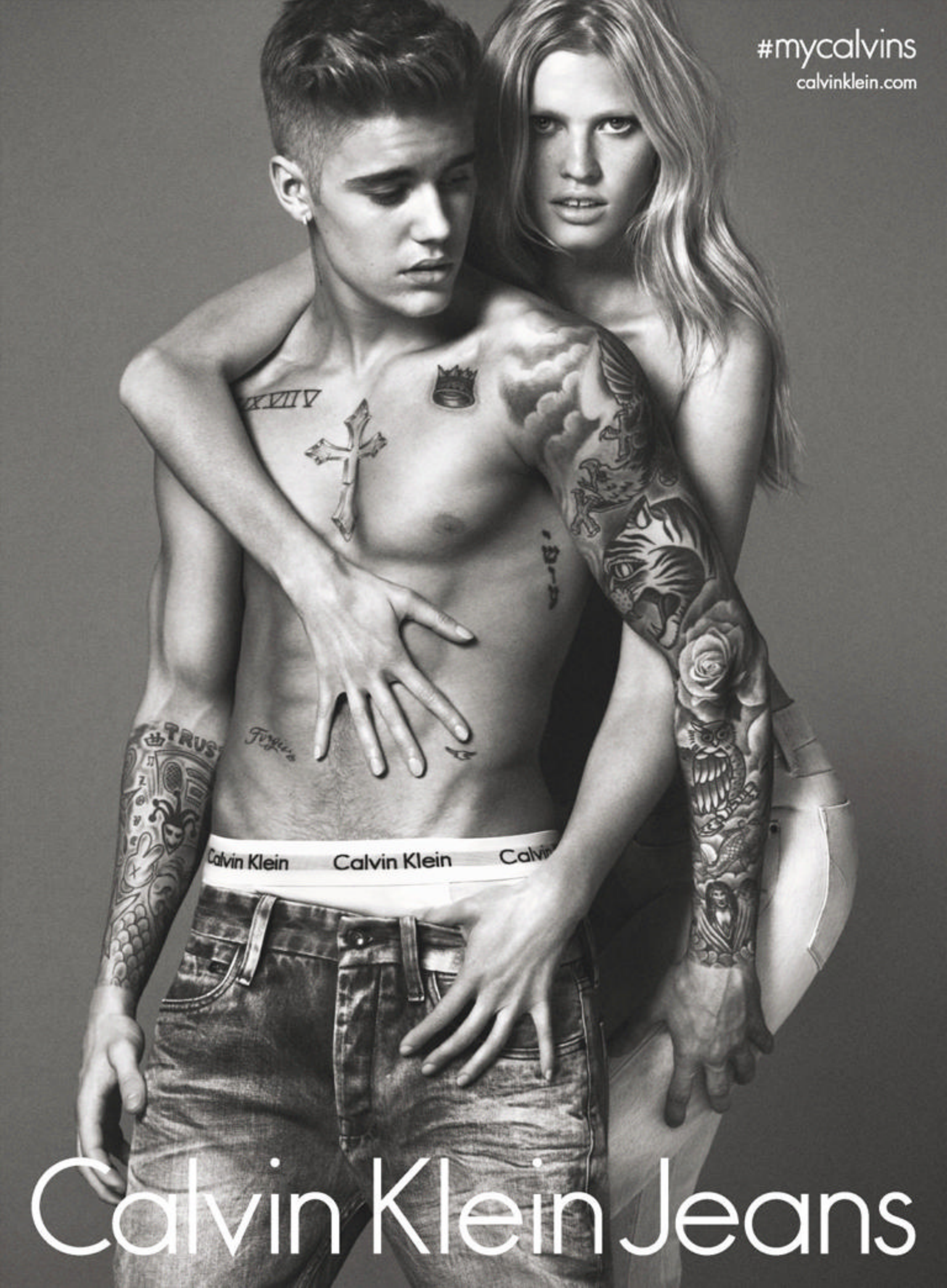
When she says, "I'm pregnant," and then she giggles and goes, "Just kidding" – that's cold-blooded, I'm sorry.

Taylor Swift

"Style"

I'm a fool for this sound. Her voice is magic – I don't care what the lyric is. I don't usually gravitate toward Top 40 radio, but this has been in my head since I checked it out.

#mycalvins
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A black and white photograph of Justin Bieber and a woman with extensive tattoos. Justin Bieber is shirtless, wearing Calvin Klein underwear and jeans. The woman is standing behind him, her hands resting on his chest and waist. She has large, detailed tattoos on her arms and chest, including a crown, a cross, and a tiger. Justin Bieber has a cross tattoo on his chest and a crown tattoo on his shoulder. The background is a plain, light color.

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Rock & Roll

Alabama Shake-up

Band follows its surprise-hit debut with a far-out new album By David Browne

ALABAMA SHAKES KNEW RIGHT AWAY THAT their second album was going to take them down a strange new path. The first track the band laid down for *Sound & Color* (out April 21st) was "Gemini," a six-minute slow-crawl mood piece that sounds more like Sly Stone's *There's a Riot*

Goin' On than the lean rock & soul of Shakes' hit 2012 debut, *Boys & Girls*. "That was a fun song for me to play to my friends," cracks bassist Zac Cockrell from beneath a bushy beard as he sits with his bandmates at a New York restaurant. "They're like, 'Uhhh... OK.' I don't think they liked it. [Cont. on 14]



BRITTANY SHEARS
Howard shows off her new haircut onstage in London in February.

ALABAMA SHAKES

[Cont. from 13] I finally quit sharing with people." Adds frontwoman Brittney Howard, with a sly smile, "Ambitious."

That's a fair word to describe all of *Sound & Color*, which runs from volcanic thrashers ("The Greatest") to silky soul ("Dunes") to spacey psychedelic-soul jams ("Future People"). "It's a bit far-out," Howard admits. "When it came time to gather all the songs, we thought, 'What kind of record is this?' And we said, 'Very strange.' But I love it."

You would have forgiven the Shakes for sticking to the sound of their debut, which has sold 725,000 copies and took them from Alabama bar band to one of rock's biggest new acts almost overnight. Soon, Adele was praising them, Robert Plant



NEW ADVENTURES IN SOUND Howard and Cockrell at Sound Emporium Studios in Nashville, where the band cut its new album

was coming to their shows, and the band was nominated for three Grammys. "I don't know what happened with all that," says Cockrell. "People just started going crazy. It was really just... weird. It was like, 'What's the source of this?'"

The journey to *Sound & Color* was a bumpy one. With Howard listening to everything from Roberta Flack to the *E.T.* soundtrack, the group decided to widen its sound. "We just wanted to be free and explore and not worry what this record would be in the public's eye," says guitarist Heath Fogg.

The Shakes booked studio time in Nashville with producer Blake Mills, but since they'd spent so much time on the road for *Boys & Girls*, they hadn't had time to write many new songs. The sessions wound up dragging out to a year. "We didn't know what the hell we were doing," says drummer Steve Johnson.

For Mills, the sessions posed challenges. "The experimentation is more in line with who they are as people than the lazy con-

nections a lot of people make to Janis Joplin or Southern rock," says Mills. "But we had to have the cohesion conversation: 'All this stuff is great, but is it a record?'" Unable to finish the lyrics to "Gemini," Howard cut up a bunch of phrases, mixed them up and pulled them out at random.

Recording wasn't all hard work. One night, the band had dinner with Kid Rock, who worked with Mills in the past. Afterward, all of the musicians headed to the studio. "We had a great time hanging out - cigars, whiskey, all that shit," says Rock. "I don't spend a lot of time with other musicians in studios, but listening to them jam, I felt I was in a privileged spot. They're making music I want to listen to." With Rock, the Shakes cut a track Mills calls "a document of a really good time." Howard compares the song

to Lynyrd Skynyrd - not that she wants to share it with the world. "You're never going to hear it," she warns. "Ever."

For the Shakes, success is now sinking in. Their day jobs - Cockrell worked for a veterinarian, Fogg painted houses, Johnson toiled in a nuclear plant in Decatur, Howard was a mail carrier - are far in the rear-view mirror. When the Shakes hit the road this year, they'll bring along three backup singers and two keyboardists to help

replicate *Sound & Color*.

Whether their fan base will follow them into riskier musical territory remains to be seen, but the first of two sold-out shows at New York's Beacon Theatre in March partly answered that question. Howard showed off a new look - a curly poodle-top haircut, shaved on the sides, plus a subtle face tattoo - and spewed out guitar leads and sang in an eerie falsetto, generally proving herself one of the most exciting and commanding new stars in rock ("She holds court up there like Otis Redding or Sister Rosetta Tharpe," says Mills).

Most of the set was devoted to *Sound & Color*, but the audience ate up each song, and didn't even mind that the band didn't bother playing "Hold On," the signature track from *Boys & Girls*. Afterward, Howard reflected on the openness of their fans. "Having the people be so welcoming is really awesome," she says. "The way I grew up was kind of conservative: 'Stay in line and don't rock the boat.' And of course, I work hard and I'm good. But I don't mind rockin' the boat a little."

TELEVISION



Leah Messer and daughter, *Teen Mom*

WHY FEWER PEOPLE WANT THEIR MTV

Network struggles amid declining ratings and the rise of YouTube and Vimeo

MTV, once the network of choice for young people, is in a rut. Ratings slipped five percent last year, advertising revenues were down three percent, and viewership for last summer's Video Music Awards dropped 18 percent. The channel's parent company, Viacom, just laid off several top executives - including producer and 28-year veteran Dave Sirulnick, who was one of MTV's last ties to its golden age. "Some of the programming we acquired years ago just doesn't work anymore," Viacom's chief executive, Philippe Dauman, told investors, announcing a plan to save \$250 million.

MTV's problems begin with its content - *Teen Mom* and *Ridiculousness* pull in 1 million to 2 million viewers per episode, but hardly overwhelm pop culture the way *Jackass* and *Jersey Shore* did. (A rep says ratings have dropped because "live television viewing is down, and young audiences are leading that trend.") More problematically, MTV has struggled to adjust to the digital era. Some shows are available free via MTV.com and on its mobile app; others are delayed for a month and sold on iTunes. "People aren't sure how to watch the [shows]," says a source close to the channel. "They're cutting the cable left and right, and it's not available by streaming."

MTV still airs videos most mornings, but vastly more viewers get their music clips from sites like YouTube and Vimeo. "Has MTV done an unbelievable job of being on that [digital] wave? Not so sure," adds Les Garland, who co-founded the channel and spent years as a senior VP. "If I were to admit my habits, I go to YouTube like everyone else."

STEVE KNOPPER



Dauman

FROM LEFT: DAVID MCCLISTER/MTV; GEORGE PIMENTEL/GETTY IMAGES

The Revolution That Wasn't

A new book explores the secret and violent history of Sixties underground radicals

THE REVOLUTION AIN'T TOMORROW. It's now. You dig?" As chronicled in journalist Bryan Burrough's revelatory new book, *Days of Rage*, that's what a hippie radical named Sam Melville told his girlfriend in the summer of 1969, shortly before stealing a bunch of dynamite and setting it off in banks, government buildings and corporate headquarters around Manhattan. It was among the first in a series of bombings carried out by homegrown would-be revolutionaries – in 1972 alone, there were more than 1,900 on U.S. soil (though the vast majority resulted in zero casualties). "When you look at the totality of the political actions," says Burrough, "the bombing, the mayhem, the assassinations, I don't know how you say that's not of political and historical significance."

Days of Rage traces the colorful sagas of the Weather Underground, the Black Liberation Army, the Symbionese Liberation Army (of Patty Hearst fame) and the FALN, a violent Puerto Rico-independence movement. Burrough based his 2004 book *Public Enemies* (a chronicle of Prohibition-era gangsters) largely on FBI files, and he initially assumed he could do the same this time. But that route proved useless, in some cases because, according to Burrough, the FBI had used illegal methods to pursue radicals and then purged its files. He ended up having to do an enormous amount of reporting, much of it awkward at best. "Think about the challenge in calling up people you don't know and asking them about buildings they bombed in 1971," says Burrough, who points out that some of the best journalism on the subject appeared in *ROLLING STONE*.



HOMEGROWN
(1) The Weathermen during the 1969 Chicago Seven protests. (2) Patty Hearst with the SLA, 1974. (3) Bernardine Dohrn and Bill Ayers of the Weather Underground in 1981.

The book is filled with fresh information, but the Weathermen sections may get the most attention; Burrough suggests that one of its leaders, Bill Ayers (whose minor associations with Barack Obama have long obsessed the right), and other

members have long coasted on inaccurate claims that they never intended to hurt anyone. Even an oft-romanticized figure like Black Panther George Jackson (subject of a laudatory Bob Dylan song) comes off as something close to a monster. Burrough reminds readers that Jackson killed a prison guard by tossing him from a balcony. Still, Burrough adds, "I don't endorse what they did. But judged on their own terms, what some of these people did was kind of remarkable."

BRIAN HIATT



GOODBYE The sign at the first Tower Records store comes down, 2009. Right: Hanks.



Colin Hanks' Tower Records film is about the end of an era

Tower Records opened in 1960 in the back of a Sacramento drugstore. Over the next 46 years, it grew to 89 stores – then went bankrupt thanks to overexpansion, online piracy and the digital revolution. Soon after

its demise, actor Colin Hanks, a Sacramento native, had an idea for his first documentary, *All Things Must Pass*. "I never knew [Tower's] history," says Hanks, 37. "I just knew it was from Sacramento and it had a great selection of records."

In the film, Tower stores are mourned by stars like Bruce Springsteen, Elton John and former employee Dave Grohl. (Full disclosure: I'm also interviewed in the film.) *All Things Must*

Pass symbolizes the record industry's boom and ultimate bust, but it's mostly a human story – an account of how a drug-store operation came to dominate record sales, thanks to a charismatic owner, Russ Solomon, who hired passionate clerks and promoted them over time to top executives. Says Hanks, "It's a family story – people coming together to do something truly unique and incredible."

STEVE KNOPPER

A Day in the Life at SXSW With Tove Lo

DAWN TO DUSK

A year ago, when Tove Lo played South by Southwest for the first time, she was an unknown Swedish artist just trying to navigate the Texas festival's chaotic scrum. "You're running with your gear from place to place, plug and play, so that was stressful," says Lo, who played six shows in six days at SXSW 2014. "But to play in a new country was amazing." A lot has happened since then. Lo (full name: Ebba Tove Elsa Nilsson) had a hit single ("Habits [Stay High]," which hit Number Three on the charts last year), released her debut album, *Queen of the Clouds*, and blew out her vocal cords, requiring surgery to remove a massive cyst. So this year, returning to Austin for her first shows after a two-month layoff, she was determined to enjoy every SXSW moment possible. "The good times are a big part of the experience," she says. "We want to do it fully." We followed the singer as she took in Austin's weird side and played a packed gig at Lance Armstrong's bike shop.

GAVIN EDWARDS



LO RIDER

"I don't need anybody else to party," Lo declared, grooving to techno in a pedicab. Above: Lo greeting the morning by looking out over Austin from her hotel.



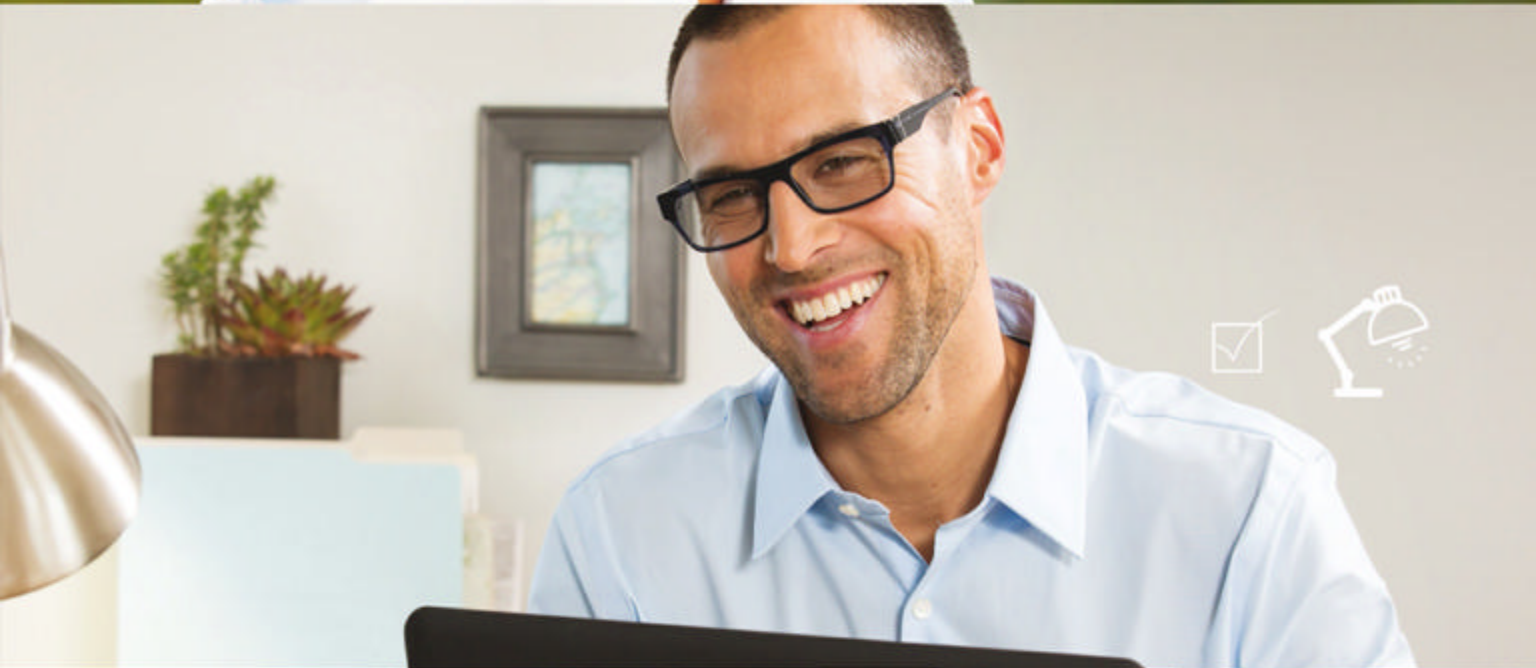
KEEPING AUSTIN WEIRD

Lo explored the "Cathedral of Junk," an installation artist Vincent Hanneman has been building in his back yard for 26 years.



SHOWTIME! Above: In the basement of Lance Armstrong's bike store, Lo and her band chant a Swedish drinking song, getting ready to hit the stage at the ROLLING STONE party. Right: It was hard to tell who was more excited by Lo's return to the stage — she or the frenzied crowd. After playing "Habits," she said, "Thank you for letting me come back to this."





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The TV Tough Guy Who Took on Scientology

Jason Beghe used to be a poster boy for the church - when he left, things got ugly

ONE NIGHT ABOUT SEVEN years ago, the actor Jason Beghe stumbled upon his own Wikipedia page. At the bottom he found a four-word phrase that nauseated him: "Public supporter of Scientology." Beghe, who currently stars in the hit NBC show *Chicago P.D.*, had left the church in disgust months earlier, though he hadn't yet made that public. "I wrote a nonconfrontational assertion that I wasn't a Scientologist anymore, and Wikipedia kept rejecting it," he says. "My buddy explained the information had to be verified."

Beghe decided to take more dramatic action. He posted a two-hour video on YouTube in which he claimed the organization was "very dangerous for your spiritual, psychological, mental, emotional health and evolution." The video shot around the world. It also put him in Scientology's crosshairs.

A journeyman character actor who's had roles in everything from *Thelma & Louise* to *G.I. Jane*, Beghe is the most charismatic talking head in *Going Clear*, the new Scientology documentary from director Alex Gibney. In the film, Beghe rails at the church in a raspy tough-guy voice (it was damaged after he yanked tubes out of his throat while hospitalized for a 1999 car accident). But *Going Clear* tells only part of his story. "I talked to them for three and a half hours," he says. "They [only used] the juicy tidbits that fit their intention."

According to Beghe, private investigators hired by the church began tracking his every move after his YouTube video. They sent Child Protective Services and the head of the Los Angeles SVU to investigate an anonymous tip that he abused his children. Beghe later got into a physical confrontation with a process server who refused to leave his property. "They claimed I

beat the shit out of him, which is not true," he says. The process server sued. "They didn't want to win it, they just wanted me to lose my attention, and all of my money. And it probably cost me \$250,000." (An attorney for the process server tells *ROLLING STONE* that Beghe pleaded "no contest" and says his version of events here is false. Scientology calls Beghe "unreliable, dishonest and biased," and groups him with other former members who speak out against the church in *Going Clear*.)

Beghe still wouldn't back down. Instead, he began speaking at protest rallies. "I heard about the violence and the cruelty," he says. "It's one thing to take someone's bread. It's another to take their soul."

Beghe calls the church's leader, David Miscavige, "a sociopath.... They think all their dirty tricks are justified because they think they're the one hope to save mankind."

Ironically, Miscavige once called Beghe "the poster boy for Scientology." In the 1990s, Beghe was an expert auditor: He went "clear" and reached the high status of Operating Thetan V. But when

his wife became pregnant in 2002, Beghe did what he calls a "fearless inventory of all the bullshit in my life." "I realized I was in a fucking cult," he says. "I told them that I wanted an amicable divorce. They sent six people to convince me to stay. They have this thing about disconnecting from people outside of Scientology, but if you disconnect from them, those bitches will not let you go."

During his time as a Scientologist, Beghe worked steadily but never had a breakthrough role. "I'm lazy," he says. "But when I left Scientology, my finances were drained, so I said, 'I gotta get a series, 'cause that's good money.'" He did: *Chicago P.D.* has already been picked up for a third season. "Part of the scripture of Scientology is that if you leave, you're gonna fall apart," he says. "And now I kicked their asses and have these tough-guy posters of me all over the country. There was a giggle in that."

ANDY GREENE



LOST THETAN "I realized I was in a fucking cult," Beghe says. "I told them I wanted an amicable divorce."



METALLICA TO REVISIT PAST - ALL OF IT

Band launches 'next-level' reissues campaign, starting with its '82 demo cassette

More than three decades into their career, Metallica are ready to look back in a big way. The band is about to launch a massive reissues campaign that will include its entire catalog. "It's time for us to put out some next-level reissues and do the song and dance of the catalog that the U2s and the Led Zeppelins and the Oasises have done," says drummer Lars Ulrich.

The first release will be a limited-edition cassette replica of the band's gritty 1982 demo, *No Life 'til Leather*, due out Record Store Day, April

18th. The tape features an early lineup with Megadeth's Dave Mustaine on lead guitar. Tracks include a rough version of "The Four Horsemen" called "The Mechanix" (with lyrics "about a sexual encounter at a gas station," Ulrich says) and the drummer's own handwriting on the J-card. "Twelve people will be able to play it," Ulrich says of the cassette, laughing.

Fans who don't own a tape deck can buy beefed-up CD and vinyl versions of *No Life 'til Leather* this summer, packed with what the drummer calls "a lot of goodies" the band has exhumed from the vaults, including more demos from that period. "Yesterday, I found a tape with some crazy stuff that I didn't even know existed," Ulrich says. *Kill 'Em All*, Metallica's 1983 debut, will see release before the end of the year. As for the timing of other reissues, Ulrich has a brief response: "It's all coming." **KORY GROW**



James Taylor's Mellow Rebirth

The songwriter emerges from semi-retirement with first all-new album since 2002

THE LAST TIME JAMES TAYLOR released an album of new material, Tower Records was a multi-million-dollar business, Tobey Maguire was the brand-new Spider-Man, and the Iraq War had yet to begin. "I got out of the habit of writing songs for about 10 years," says the singer-songwriter, 67. "I just never prioritized it."

That changed for *Before This World* (due out June 16th), Taylor's first all-new LP since 2002's *October Road*. About two years ago, concerned that he might never release another album of new songs, he decided he needed to cut himself off from his everyday life. "I hadn't been able to convince my manager, my wife and my kids that this had to be a priority," he says. "But I said to them, 'If I don't get this record written, I don't know what's going to happen.' And then they let me go."

Taylor holed up in a waterfront apartment in Newport, Rhode Island, bringing along his guitar, a lyric notebook and little else. "I didn't know anybody, and I didn't see anybody," he says. "That's when things started to happen." He emerged with a batch of songs, which he completed recording this year in a barn on his property in Western Massachusetts with his touring band, featuring Steve Gadd on drums and Jimmy Johnson on bass.

The result is a collection of mellow, folk music that's reminiscent of Taylor's most enduring work from the 1970s. Highlights range from a reflection on the Red Sox's miraculous 2004 season ("Angels of Fenway") to a song about Taylor's difficult path to recovery ("Watchin' Over Me") to the



TAYLOR MADE
The singer in his home studio in Massachusetts

road song "Stretch of the Highway," which references President Eisenhower's 1950s interstate highway project and Chicago's "first-class poontang." "Where I grew up, a woman was as apt to say poontang as a man," Taylor explains. "It sort of meant 'lovin'." When I play it for people from other parts of the country, they're sort of like, *wow*."

Taylor says he couldn't care less how many copies the LP sells. "I have no idea what releasing an album even means anymore," he says. "Friends of mine say, 'James, you have to adjust your expectations. People don't buy these things.' Not to

be presumptuous, but Vincent Van Gogh sold just two paintings while he was alive. If that's what your medium is, you simply must do it."

After finishing his current European tour, Taylor plans to return to America to play more shows this summer, including a hometown gig at Boston's Fenway Park. "People say to me, 'Ten years from now when you're 76 years old, are you still going to be doing this?'" Taylor says. "But B.B. King and Tony Bennett are models for continuing. You find a way forward if your audience keeps showing up."

ANDY GREENE

STUDIO NOTES



Brandon Flowers' Teenage Dream

For his second solo LP, *The Desired Effect* (due out May 19th), the Killers' Brandon Flowers teamed with producer Ariel Rechtshaid (Haim, Vampire Weekend) and session players including Bruce Hornsby. "No-

body plays piano like him," the singer says of Hornsby. "There's a particular emotion that he conjures up, which I associate with being a teenager." One highlight samples U.K. synth-pop act Bronski Beat's 1984 hit "Smalltown Boy." "I've never done a sample before," he says, "but it's a match made in heaven."



ATL Rappers Migos: Mo' Money, No Problems

Migos, the Atlanta rap trio behind hits like "Versace," recorded much of their debut LP in a newly purchased suburban mansion. That doesn't mean they softened up. "We made a studio in the closet so we can get the same feel," says the group's Quavo. One difference? A broader sound that draws on acts like N.W.A and features production from L.A.'s DJ Mustard. "Everybody's expecting trap," Quavo adds. "We're gonna switch it up, hit 'em with a lot of West Coast songs."

Quavo, Takeoff, Offset (from left)



COUNTRY HALL

DYLAN GOES BLUEGRASS
Dylan with bluegrass legend Earl Scruggs (second from left) and two of Scruggs' sons, circa 1972

Nashville Rock City

Country Hall of Fame charts Music City's other history – from Bob Dylan to Neil Young

IN LATE 1965, BOB DYLAN HEADED INTO a New York studio with the Band to record *Blonde on Blonde*, but things didn't jell – the magic the group produced onstage just wasn't there. But producer Bob Johnston had a novel idea: Move the sessions down to Columbia Music Row Studios in Nashville. “At the time, the city was seen as a conservative, backwater town,” says Michael Gray, a museum editor at the Country Music Hall of Fame and Museum. “Having a counterculture figure come to town to record was very unique.”

Working with the cream of the Nashville session scene, Dylan finished *Blonde on Blonde* in a matter of weeks, and soon everyone from the

Byrds to Neil Young to Leonard Cohen and even Paul McCartney followed Dylan to Nashville. Now, the Country Music Hall of Fame is commemorating this period with its newest exhibit, “Dylan, Cash and the Nashville Cats: A New Music City.” “There were dozens of albums made in those few short years after Dylan’s album came out,” says Gray. “They were so impressed with the Nashville musicians’ virtuosity and their ability to play anything that they kept coming back.”

Spread across 5,000 square feet, the exhibit includes the Fender Telecaster that Charlie Daniels played on *Nashville Skyline*, Johnston’s *Blonde on Blonde* acetates, and the pedal steel guitar that Lloyd Green used on *Sweetheart of the Rodeo*. “Now that the Black Keys and the Kings of Leon are here, people are realizing Nashville isn’t just a country town,” Gray says. “But we wanted to show that isn’t a new thing.”

ANDY GREENE

BOOKS

How to Ruin Your Life in One Tweet

IN DECEMBER 2013, JUSTINE SACCO, A senior publicist at IAC, made a terrible joke on Twitter: “Going to Africa. Hope I don’t get AIDS. Just kidding. I’m white!” The Internet gleefully tore Sacco apart, but British author Jon Ronson had a different take. “There was a brutality to that which I didn’t think we were capable of,” he says.

Sacco’s story is at the heart of *So You’ve Been Publicly Shamed*, Ronson’s new book. It dives into the culture of public shaming, which goes



Ronson

back to the Puritans and beyond but has exploded online. Ronson’s examples of ruined lives range from ex-*New Yorker* writer Jonah Lehrer to Lindsey Stone, a charity worker who lost her job after a photo of her flipping the bird at Arlington National Cemetery went viral. “The democratization of justice on social media has turned horrific,” says Ronson, who also wrote *The Men Who Stare at Goats*. He hopes his book will help break the cycle: “I want to be in a world where people aren’t defined by the worst thing they did.”

JASON NEWMAN



CHECKING IN

LUDACRIS’ FURIOUS COMEBACK

In the past five years, Ludacris has starred in three *Fast and the Furious* sequels (the latest, *Furious 7*, hits theaters April 3rd) and released exactly zero new albums. But don’t count him out of the rap game just yet: His latest LP, *Ludaversal*, is his strongest in years. “I’m my biggest critic,” says Luda, 37. “But this shit is out of control.”

A few of these tracks feel aimed at people who think you’re irrelevant. Is this your “Forgot About Dre” moment?

I didn’t go any-fucking-where. I shot a couple of movies, but I still know that I will slaughter any rapper out there. And to the people who feel like I might not be as good, I’m



Ludacris

going to continue to slap you upside the fucking head until you wake up.

On the new song “Grass Is Always Greener,” you say you quit drinking for a year. What was that about?

I was on vacation with Kevin Hart one December, and I drank so much fucking alcohol that I said to myself, “Yo, let me see if I can stop.” It was a discipline thing.

Did you stop smoking weed, too?

Um, no [laughs].

How long do you want to keep rapping? Are you going to keep going into your fifties and sixties?

Nah. I’d rather be behind the scenes. I’m not going to be rapping with a cane.

SIMON ZOICK-LEVINSON

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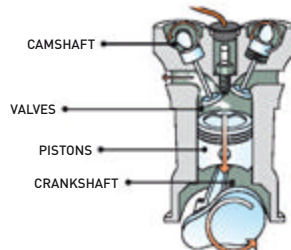


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UNSTONED
Weiland in
New York in
March

CHECKING IN

How Scott Weiland Found His Third Act

The singer on his new band, STP touring without him and why he's like Keith Richards

TWO YEARS AGO, SCOTT WEILAND was at a low point. He had been down before – a fact of life for one of rock's most notorious junkies – but now he was a man without a band. Though he had been clean for years, Stone Temple Pilots fired him anyway, citing chronic tardiness and poor onstage performance. His other band, Velvet Revolver, had split in 2008, after a tumultuous tour in which members barely spoke to each other and sniped at one another in the press.

Rather than going solo, Weiland assembled a group of L.A. musicians, named them the Wildabouts (after a line in Donovan's "Mellow Yellow") and hit the road playing a set of STP songs. "We got really tight as a unit," says Weiland, 47. "It made me really want to go into the studio."

They did, and the result, *Blaster*, is a collection of riff-heavy originals, plus a cover of T. Rex's "20th Century Boy." At times, the album suggests a more grown-up version of STP. "I listened to a lot of Bob Dylan songs to see how he works," says

Weiland. "I've gotten into writing story-songs. I used to just write about my own apathy, but that youthful, apathetic way of looking at things grew thin as I got older."

Weiland and the Wildabouts just embarked on a U.S. club tour, mixing new tracks with a handful of STP classics. "Certain songs like 'Interstate Love Song' and 'Plush' I won't do," he says. "Those are sort of Holy Grail songs – they don't fit the Wildabouts vibe."

The Wildabouts will be on the road at the same time as Stone Temple Pilots, who are now fronted by Linkin Park's Chester Bennington. "It's weird," says Weiland. "I wish him luck. The lawsuit [over the band-name rights, which they settled out of court] is behind us. I hope they do well." Can he imagine a scenario where he'd ever front STP or Velvet Revolver again? "I can't imagine it right now," he says. "But never say never when it comes to rock & roll."

If Weiland has gotten out of the shadow of his previous bands, his junkie image may be harder to shake. "It's the same as Keith Richards," Weiland says with a sigh. "People still ask him the same questions they asked him 30 years ago, even though he's a completely different person. And I'm a completely different person than I was 15 years ago."

ANDY GREENE

COMEDY

ANARCHY ON THE AIRWAVES

Cult comedy heroes of 'Best Show' celebrate 15 years of weirdness and music jokes

Since 2000, the most unique comedy duo in the country weren't on TV or the Internet. They were radio guys: Tom Scharpling and Jon Wurster, whose New Jersey-based *The Best Show on WFMU* was so beloved among comedy geeks that Aziz Ansari once said its fans wanted to "turn it into a woman" and make love to it. Scharpling played the cranky host, riffing moodily while taking calls from real listeners; "friends of Tom," like Ansari and Zach Galifianakis; and a cast of hilarious fictional characters played by Wurster, from Timmy von Trimble, a two-inch-tall white supremacist, to the Music Scholar, whose rarefied tastes were so perverse he only listened to "air mixes" and Limp Bizkit. "We're not a show where you're



Scharpling
(left), Wurster

chained to something, every episode, to the minute," insists Scharpling. "Whatever shape it takes is whatever shape it takes, and I love that."

Now there's a career-spanning box set of more than 20 hours of Scharpling and Wurster's best bits. "With WFMU, the only restriction was we couldn't curse," says Wurster, who is also the drummer in Superchunk and in the Mountain Goats. *Best Show* left WFMU in 2013, when Scharpling decided to do it as a weekly podcast. Recently, Scharpling and Wurster performed four sold-out live shows in Brooklyn, followed by appearances in L.A. and Chicago. "It is a real community," says Wurster of the show's fans. "I was in Sydney, just sitting there eating an ice cream cone, and this guy with a child walks by in a *Best Show* shirt. It's crazy how far it reaches."

SEAN MCCABE

An Iraqi Band's (Semi) Happy Ending

Ten years ago, Acrassicauda escaped Baghdad. That was the easy part **By Roy Scranton**

FIFTEEN YEARS AGO, MARWAN Hussein, Firas Al-Lateef, Faisal Talal and Tony Aziz were teenage headbangers in Saddam Hussein's Iraq, learning to play Metallica and Slayer off bootleg cassettes. They named their band Acrassicauda (after Iraq's ubiquitous black scorpion, *Androctonus crassicauda*) and joined a small but active heavy-metal scene in Baghdad.

Then, in 2003, the U.S. invaded, and life became a hellish cycle of checkpoints, explosions and murders. Marwan Hussein and Talal were almost killed by a car bomb, Aziz's house was damaged by a mortar, and the band's rehearsal space was blown up, probably by a rocket. "We've seen some shit, man," says Hussein. "You see stuff that makes you question your existence."

A few years later, Acrassicauda fled to Syria. Meanwhile, a Vice documentary, *Heavy Metal in Baghdad*, helped make them media darlings – and high-profile targets for extremist groups, who often attacked Western-style musicians. A flicker of fame turned Acrassicauda into permanent exiles.

Feeling responsible, the filmmakers who had made them famous helped them get refugee visas to the U.S. in 2008. The bandmates eventually wound up in Elizabeth, New Jersey, and started grinding it out on the local metal scene, scoring an opening slot for industrial-rock vets Ministry (frontman Al Jourgensen called them his "favorite metal band in the world"). They finally made it into the studio last September to cut their debut, *Gilgamesh*, a Kickstarter-funded heavy-metal tour de force named after an ancient Sumerian legend.

"The *Epic of Gilgamesh* is a very weird story," Hussein says. "He was a lost soul until the very last, when he comes to terms with his mortality. In the end, it's a story about rebirth." The band worked to give the album a deeply Arabic sound, using complex Middle Eastern rhythms and traditional instruments like the darbuka, all while thrashing as hard as possible. "Our producer was Greek," says Hussein. "He was listening and shout-



FROM BAGHDAD WITH LOVE

Marwan Hussein, Faisal Talal and Moe Al Ansari (above, from left). Left: Acrassicauda rehearsing in Iraq in 2001. The band's practice space was later destroyed by a rocket.

visit. "I have no idea how things are going," Talal says. "Your family won't tell you a lot about the situation, because they love you. And when you watch the media, you don't want to believe a lot."

More than 2 million Iraqis fled the country between 2003 and 2011. The Syrian civil war and the rise of ISIS have only made things worse. Nearly 200,000 refugees left Iraq last year, and more than 2.4 million are displaced internally. "It keeps brain-fucking you," says Talal. "You keep thinking, 'Why did it have to happen?'"

Yet Acrassicauda keep driving forward. A young Iraqi refugee named Moe Al Ansari stepped in to play lead guitar after original guitarist Aziz left the band. The members have become U.S. citizens and are hoping to tour in the Middle East this year. "Hopefully, people will come to the show because they love the music," says Hussein, "and not because they want some story about refugees. First and foremost, we're a band. We're musicians."

ing, 'Opa!' [a Greek term of affirmation]. If you're headbanging and saying 'opa,' we're good."

Making it as Iraqi refugees, it turns out, is even harder than making it as a metal band. Lead singer Talal remembers having to walk 40 minutes from the train to his Jersey house every night – none of them had a driver's license. Between gigs and tours, the bandmates have worked in bars, convenience stores and restaurants to pay the bills.

All the while, they have been cut off from friends and family back home. The risks are still too great to return, even for a



MOVIES

Inside Sebastião Salgado's Amazing Life in Pictures

How filmmaker Wim Wenders brought the humanitarian photographer's story to life

THE FIRST TIME GERMAN FILMMAKER Wim Wenders saw a picture by Brazilian photographer Sebastião Salgado – a haunting black-and-white portrait of workers toiling in the Amazon's Serra Pelada gold mine – he bought the print on the spot. “[Salgado] is able to create bonds with people by investing more than other photographers,” says Wenders. “He doesn’t stay a day or two and get the heck out of there. He stays, and comes back a year later. He realizes these people expect him to come back, because they became friends.”

After admiring Salgado's work (which has often appeared in *ROLLING STONE*) from afar for 20 years, Wenders traveled to Paris in 2009 and showed up at the photographer's door. They bonded over their shared love of soccer, and when Salgado, 71, and his son Juliano asked for advice about doing a big-screen presentation of Sebastião's work, Wenders took on the project. “You have all these great stories,” he told Salgado. “Tell them alongside your photos.” Looking back now, Wenders says, “I had talked myself into doing it.”

The result, *The Salt of the Earth*, charts the photographer's career from his early days as an expat economist living in France (where he



ENDS OF THE WORLD Juliano and Sebastião Salgado in the Amazon (top); Sebastião's famous image of a shrinking Antarctic iceberg, 2005 (above)

first picked up a camera as a lark) to his time chronicling the civil war in Rwanda and migrant workers in the Third World. What emerges is a thought-provoking study on the intersection of journalism and humanitarian commitment.

The documentary also incorporates personal footage shot by Juliano as he accompanied his father on several assignments – an experience that allowed him to be close to a parent he rarely saw while growing up. “I finally felt I knew who he is,” Juliano admits. Says Wenders, “I’ve been looking at these photographs for 20 years. And it wasn’t until I saw the film that I felt I finally saw them for the first time.”

DAVID FEAR

THE CROZ

CROSBY'S TWITTER YEARS

The CSN singer has gone on a brilliant binge of online oversharing

At 73, David Crosby has embraced Twitter with the fervor of a teenager. He answers as many as 50 fan questions a day, on anything from his favorite cheese (Gruyère) to his attempts to make peace with Neil Young, whose girlfriend, Daryl Hannah, he called a “poisonous predator.” Here are some highlights:



Crosby

On Joni Mitchell: “She’s nuts... hung up on her last two times.”

On the band he formed in prison in the 1980s: “Lead [guitar] player was good. In for life... shot a cop... drugs.”

On Kanye West: “He’s an idiot and a poser... has no talent at all.”

On Kiss: “If you don’t have any songs you paint your faces. Wear costume.”

On the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame: “I think CSNY deserves to be in Hall of Fame separately from CSN. Completely different band. As different as chicken and cheese. Both good.”

On Mike Love: “Quite possibly [the biggest jerk in rock]... not a good person.”

On whether he supports Hillary Clinton: “That’s a tough one... brings us back to the lesser of two evils thing. Maybe.”

On the state of his relationship with Young: “He’s pretty mad at me. I apologized. We’ll see.”

ANDY GREENE

BREAKING

An Ex-Chef's Fully Baked Debut

Rapper Action Bronson dials up Mark Ronson (and Billy Joel) for 'Mr. Wonderful'

I LIKE TO FUCKING GET PHYSICAL," says Action Bronson. At 300-plus pounds, sporting a gigantic red beard and a BERRICK VS. TYSON hat, the Queens-bred ex-high school football player is known for shows that can look more like WrestleMania than a rap concert – mowing through crowds, stage-diving and executing the occasional clothesline. "I'm a fat fuck," he says. "But underneath all this, I'm like Mr. Universe."

Beyond his unpredictable stage persona, Bronson has exploded thanks to undeniable charisma and lyrics that explore his weapons-grade perviness and culinary obsessions. He's been on tracks alongside Kendrick Lamar and Mac Miller, and he appears on the official remix to Mark Ronson's Number One hit "Uptown Funk." And, after a series of acclaimed mixtapes, he just released the Ronson-produced *Mr. Wonderful*, his full-length major-label debut, where Bronson even shows us his singing chops. "I apparently have a natural voice," says Bronson, as he sits in a Peruvian restaurant in Queens dipping succulent rotisserie chicken into ají sauce. "I just have to get out of the shyness."

Bronson was a successful chef while working his way up as a rapper. He was enrolled in the Art Institute of New York City's culinary program before cooking at steakhouses and Citi Field, where he helped prepare meals for the Mets. One day at



work, he slipped on a wet kitchen floor and broke his leg. While recovering, he had an allergic reaction to Percocet, which led to an epiphany and a decision to pursue hip-hop full-time. He became an Internet celebrity – hosting a pair of culinary-themed web series – and in 2012 he signed with Eminem's management.

Bronson cut *Mr. Wonderful* with Drake producer Noah "40" Shebib as well as Ronson, who offered some key vocal coaching. "I just followed the notes [he played on] the piano," says Bronson, describing the chorus to "Baby Blue." "I was like, 'Yo, that's kind of cheating,' and he was like, 'No, it's

not, motherfucker. We do this for Amy Winehouse, we do this for everybody.'"

Ronson co-produced "Brand New Car," which interpolates Billy Joel's "Zanzibar." Bronson had to contact the singer-songwriter to get permission to use his music. "Ronson wrote him a handwritten note, because it's more sincere," Bronson says. "He's the Piano Man, for fuck's sake!" (Joel approved the song.) Before finishing his meal with a virgin piña colada, he adds, "There's places I haven't been – haven't been, musically. You're watching me bloom. I'm blooming late in front of people's eyes."

CHRISTOPHER R. WEINGARTEN



WHO'S IN CHARGE? Stamp (left) and Lambert in 1966. "They weren't good managers," says filmmaker James D. Cooper. "But they wrote their own rule book."

THE INNOVATIVE DUO WHO DROVE THE WHO'S MAGIC BUS

In the summer of 1964, two aspiring filmmakers, Chris Stamp and Kit Lambert, stumbled upon four mods called the High Numbers in a London club. The two were so impressed, they decided to become the group's managers, despite having no experience. Soon, the band changed its name to the Who, and, with help from

Lambert and Stamp, conquered the globe. "What's amazing is they weren't good managers," says James D. Cooper, whose new film documents the pair's uneven reign. "But they wrote their own rule book."

Lambert & Stamp covers the duo's innovations – like pushing the Who to play actual opera houses on the *Tommy* tour – as

well as their scattershot style. Lambert was a heavy drinker, and the pair fought bitterly with the band over the 1975 *Tommy* movie. Lambert died in 1981, but the film has interviews with Pete Dinklage, Roger Daltrey and Stamp, who died shortly after filming. "It was almost like he got it all out and then let go," Cooper says. **ANDY GREENE**

Adam Horovitz

Ad-Rock on his acting career, the Beastie Boys' legacy and his plans for the future

By Brian Hiatt

FOR SOME GEN X'ERS, IT may be unnerving to see Adam Horovitz, a.k.a. Ad-Rock, convincingly (and hilariously) play an uncool dad – complete with infected sonogram tattoo – in Noah Baumbach's dark new comedy, *While We're Young*. But the truly painful moment comes toward the end, when Horovitz throws the line "We're old men!" at co-star Ben Stiller. "I know – what're you gonna do?" says Horovitz, 48, who returned to acting after a long absence simply because his friend Baumbach offered him a part. "At least we're here, still."

Who did you base this character on?

He is certainly like a lot of people I've come in contact with. When you get to be a grown-up, people are like, "If you don't have a kid, then you're not a real member of society." So it was kind of easy. You starred as a troubled teen in 1989's *Lost Angels*. What happened to your acting career after that?

I got more serious about actually being a musician, as opposed to just somebody in a band that got really lucky. I was going on a lot of auditions, and I was really bad at it, and it sucked. I wasn't getting hired, so it added up, like, "I probably don't wanna do this." Any close calls with big roles?

I went for an audition for the *Doors* movie. And so as I'm walking in to meet Oliver Stone, I'm like, "There's no way you're gonna cast me in this movie, right?" And he was like, "No." I was like, "Well, cool. I was glad just meeting you." And he's like, "Yeah. Well, cool. There ya go." And I left.

What part were you up for?

I have no idea. Certainly not Jim Morrison. The Jewish Jim Morrison.

Maybe it was Robby Krieger?

Josh Morrison. Oh, my God, we need to write that movie now!

Any thoughts on Iggy Azalea, the problematic white rapper of the moment?

I've heard all of maybe one song by Iggy Azalea, so I don't know. I don't particularly pay attention to much at all, really, in general. Like, I watch *The Walking Dead*, and that's about it. All I know is that she sounds like a really bad version of Da Brat.

How's work on the big Beastie Boys book going?

The idea of the book is about us as a band and things we've done, but also about New York and all the things we've seen. I've been doing a lot – a lot – of writing. Which has definitely been interesting. That's a weird thing to do – to, like, be a writer and write stories, and especially about yourself and things that you've done.

Have you given any thought to some Beasties archival releases?

There's stuff that would be cool to put out there that I think people who like our band would be happy with. We got hundreds of hours of music that we've never put out, because most of it is awful. But some of it is pretty interesting, at least if you're into the band, so I've got plans to do something like that when this book is done.

The writing process means facing a lot of memories of Adam Yauch.

It's nice reminiscing, going back to certain times and stuff, but I would much prefer to just be going and having dinner with Yauch instead.

Would it be fair to say there's a huge hole in your life?

Well, it's several holes, because basically my identity of who I am as a grown-up is in this band, so that's no more. And then my friend since, I don't know, 10th grade, business partner, all of that stuff. It's very strange. It's completely confusing.

Do you have a sense of your career's future?

I don't know! What do you think, what should I do? I have no fuckin' clue.

You've mentioned the possibility of a solo album – maybe that!

All right, I guess I'll get to work on that. I'll be sure to contact you for my Kickstarter [laughs]. I did do this score for this Dock Ellis documentary, and that was really fun and it's a good movie, and I think I'll do that in the future. And so I just gotta figure out how to have someone hire me to do that. I mean, that's the other thing, when you're in a band, people are like, "You're in a band, so this is the thing you do." But now I'm just a person. I gotta figure out, what kind of person am I? But, you know, I could be in a worse situation [laughs].







CONFIDENCE MAN
Hamm as Draper

Last Call for 'Mad Men'

For the landmark drama's final run, Don Draper is haunted by all the ghosts and human wreckage he's left in his wake **By Rob Sheffield**

IF THERE'S ANYTHING Matthew Weiner learned from his apprentice years on *The Sopranos*, it's this: Keep the Russians in the woods. One of the countless ways *The Sopranos* changed the world was how

Mad Men

Sundays, 10 p.m., AMC

David Chase left plot threads dangling everywhere, refusing to play by the rules and wrap things up. So we never did find out what happened to the Russian hit man hiding out in the woods after he ate Paulie Walnuts' shoe for dinner. And as *Mad Men* heads into the final stretch – one last seven-chapter miniseries – Don Draper's head is like the Pine Barrens, full of dangerous types we can't be sure we won't see again.

So nobody knows how *Mad Men* will end – all we know is it won't be enough. *Mad Men* has given fans seven seasons' worth of seduction and suffering and Scotch and Sinatra,

more than any finale could ever possibly resolve, and whatever happens, we'll crave more of it. That's the way it should be. Epics aren't supposed to have satisfying endings. That's what makes them epics – *The Iliad* ends with the Trojan War still raging, *The Aeneid* ends before Aeneas founds Rome, and *Mad Men* is guaranteed to end before Don Draper finds happiness.

Last season, Don made it to the edge of the Sixties – the 1969 moon landing. After groveling his way back into a job at Sterling Cooper, he had to humble himself even more to turn back into a force in the ad world. The season ended with the fantastic dream sequence where his just-departed mentor Bert Cooper serenades him with "The Best Things in Life Are Free." But more crucially, Don got to tell Peggy the only three words that will ever satisfy him: "Back to work." For Don, work is what alcohol is for Homer Simpson: the cause of and solution to all of life's problems.

The excellent premiere episode of the final run has that same punchline: "Back to work!" But Don has spent the Sixties leaving a trail of emotional wreckage behind him, and it's no consolation that so many of the people he's used up and discarded are dead. It's usu-

ally the dead ones who give him the most trouble, showing up in his guilt-ridden hallucinations. Like Bob Dylan, another Sixties antihero Don resembles in so many ways, he needs a steam shovel to keep away the dead.

Part of the *Mad Men* mystique is how characters faded out for years at a time, only to jump back into the story. Remember the schoolteacher's epileptic brother, the one Don told to give him a call if he needed help? Still out there. Remember how Dr. Faye casually mentioned her mobbed-up dad? Pete and Peggy's baby? Roger's hippie daughter? Sal? So many Russians in the woods. Don's philosophy has always been to move forward as if the past never happened – as he told Peggy, "It will *shock* you how much it never happened." But at this point, even he realizes that's a fantasy he can't sell anymore, not even to himself.

How are we going to live without this guy? Or the rest of these glorious, damaged souls; no other drama has offered such a host of characters who are sheer narcotic pleasure to spend an hour with, even at their most morally depraved. How will we survive without Roger and his lubricated taunts? Joan's sneers? Peggy's rants? Pete's hissy fits? *Mad Men* has been loaded with so many toxic delights that we'll miss bitterly. Saying goodbye will be an agonizing experience of historic proportions. **2**

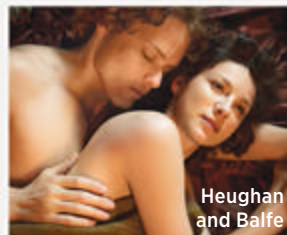
SHORT TAKE

Fifty Shades of Tartan

Outlander

Saturdays, 9 p.m., Starz

Outlander turned out to be one of last year's weirdest surprises – a time-traveling romance that looked like a harmless way to chill with your mom but instead was a lot filthier than anyone could have predicted. Even weirder, it was also much better. If you watch only one show about frequently naked people battling British redcoats in the 18th century, make it this one. Caitriona Balfe's Claire is a British nurse during World War II who slips through a time portal to the Scottish Highlands of 1743. She weds the hotblooded warrior



Heughan
and Balfe

Jamie (Sam Heughan), boning him blithely in the heather o'er the glen, forgetting about her husband back in 1945. With all the sword fights, muskets and beaucoup nudity, *Outlander* is the tormented sex drama *Fifty Shades of Grey* had no chance of being. **R.S.**

BILLY CRYSTAL

JOSH GAD

THE COMEDIANS

AN FX ORIGINAL COMEDY SERIES ABOUT AN FX ORIGINAL COMEDY SERIES



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APRIL 9 • THURS 10

FX FEARLESS

"This kid has spunk, moxie and probably a few other STDs." —Will Ferrell, at the Justin Bieber Comedy Central roast

Random Notes



'Hakuna Matata' From Dubai!

Fresh off the Number One success of his *If You're Reading This It's Too Late* mixtape, Drake hopped a jet to play a show in Dubai. There was a stressful moment when an overeager clubgoer gave Drake an aggressive pat on the head – and was promptly pummeled by club security. But everything was copacetic when Drizzy got invited to the home of the prime minister's daughter and got to feed a pet lion. "2 percent or skim?" he wrote on Instagram.



MUMFORD AND STUD Marcus Mumford had lunch in New York with Jake Gyllenhaal. The two have been pals since Gyllenhaal tagged along for the 2011 Railroad Revival Tour.



Grandpa Phil's Big Night

Grateful Dead bassist Phil Lesh is 75, with more than a touch of grey, but he jammed harder than ever at a four-night birthday run at New York's Capitol Theatre. On the first night, Lesh opened the show singing "Ripple" as he held grandson Levon Lesh. Soon, Phil will start rehearsals for the Dead's highly anticipated July shows in Chicago.



EXPRESS YOURSELF

In her first-ever *Howard Stern* appearance, Madonna opened up about motherhood and dating Tupac. Why did it take her so long to appear? "I didn't think you guys liked me," she told Stern.



FASHIONISTAS

Kanye West met up with superfan Lorde at the fashion shows in Paris. "I feel lucky to even be in a room with him," says Lorde.

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: DRAKE/INSTAGRAM; JOSIAH KAMAU/BUZZFOTO.COM; DINO PERRUCCI; © STEPHANE CARDINALE/CORBIS; KEVIN MAZUR/GETTY IMAGES FOR SIRIUSXM



POWER TRIO Patti Smith, Debbie Harry and Miley Cyrus hung backstage after belting out Smith's "People Have the Power" together at New York's annual Tibet House benefit at Carnegie Hall.



AUSTRALIAN STALLION Perhaps enjoying the extra time she has since she quit Twitter to "get out of the cycle of negativity," Iggy Azalea took horseback riding lessons in L.A.

A PEPPER'S LIFE

The Chili Peppers are deep into work on their next album, but Anthony Kiedis found time to hit the beach in Malibu with 22-year-old girlfriend Wanessa Milhomem.



Arcade Funk

Last year at Coachella, Win Butler gave a shout-out to "all the bands still playing actual instruments." But the Arcade Fire frontman proved he wasn't a *total* hater at New Orleans' Buku Festival when he played a set under the name DJ Windows 98. "Ninety-nine percent of dance music is garbage, but when it's great, it's a really beautiful thing," he told RS last year. "When I'm trying to DJ, it's mostly a lot of African stuff, Haitian records from the Sixties."



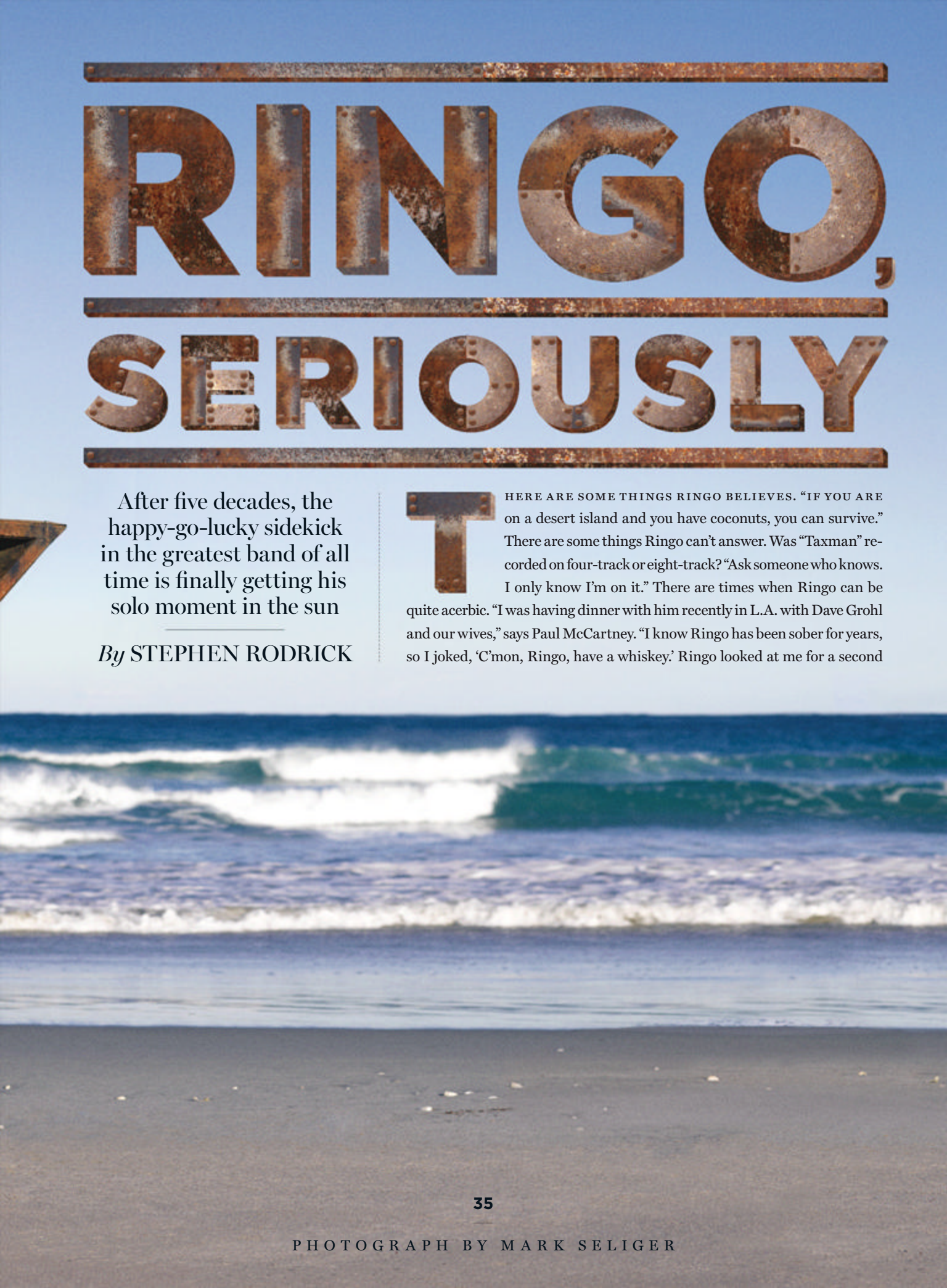
NO MORE BLUES Brand-new parents Gary Clark Jr. and Nicole Trunfio celebrated the SXSW premiere of ROLLING STONE's new short film - part of our "Mastering the Craft" series, sponsored by Patrón - tracing Clark's teenage blues roots.



UNDERCOVER Keith Richards and daughter Theodora grabbed lunch in New York's West Village. "I've always been a daddy's girl," she's said.

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: DIMITRIOS KAMBOURIS/GETTY IMAGES FOR TIBET HOUSE; FK-ROL/XTONLINE.COM; ERIKA GOLDING/GETTY IMAGES; CHRISTOPHER PETERSON/SPLASH NEWS; KOURY ANGELO; JD/SPLASH NEWS





RINGO, SERIOUSLY

After five decades, the happy-go-lucky sidekick in the greatest band of all time is finally getting his solo moment in the sun

By STEPHEN RODRICK

THERE ARE SOME THINGS RINGO BELIEVES. “IF YOU ARE on a desert island and you have coconuts, you can survive.” There are some things Ringo can’t answer. Was “Taxman” recorded on four-track or eight-track? “Ask someone who knows. I only know I’m on it.” There are times when Ringo can be quite acerbic. “I was having dinner with him recently in L.A. with Dave Grohl and our wives,” says Paul McCartney. “I know Ringo has been sober for years, so I joked, ‘C’mon, Ringo, have a whiskey.’ Ringo looked at me for a second

and says, 'What, and end up looking like you?' I deserved it."

And then there are things Ringo Starr wants to make absolutely clear. He is dressed all in black and turns his sunglasses toward the sun. He speaks slowly in his Beverly Hills-via-Liverpool Postal District 8 accent.

"You know my real name isn't Ringo, right?"

HIS REAL NAME IS RICHARD STARKEY. His wife calls him Ritchie. He's 74. He is one of rock's greatest drummers, and – even if he doesn't have the songwriting gifts of the other Beatles – he is one of the finest entertainers in the history of Western civilization.

Think about it. If you're between 20 and 80 and someone mentions Ringo, what do you do? If you're not Hitler, you start smiling. If you're 67, you remember the nose and bouncing hair at Shea. If you're in your thirties, you think of the little man narrating *Shining Time Station* when you were eight. And if you were ever a parent, you thank Ringo for the three minutes of serenity "Yellow Submarine" brings to every truculent four-year-old. He can work high – backbeating for John, Paul and George. He can work low – Wednesday night for the senior crowd in Fort Pierce, Florida, high-hatting Toto's "Rosanna" at the Sunrise Theatre.

Ringo will bring his road show to Cleveland on April 18th for a different kind of event when he's inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame as a solo artist. McCartney will give the speech. There will be the usual hosannas, but probably not a lot of talk of Ringo as a tortured artist. That's not Ringo, not the tortured part, even if he has survived alcoholism, growing up without a father or a toilet, and spending two years in a sanitarium with tuberculosis. "I always thought I had a great childhood," says Ringo with a laugh, as he talks about his mum taking two buses and a ferry across the Mersey to visit him once a week. "Then a therapist told me, 'Well, actually, it sounds like you were abandoned and lived in a slum.'"

Laughter as medicine agrees with Ringo. He is Gollum-skinny and appears younger than his son Zak, who drums for the Who. That's probably because Zak doesn't live on vegetables, juices and broiled potatoes. "Every time I see Ringo, he smells of kale," jokes Joe Walsh, Eagles guitarist and Starr's brother-in-law.

Much of Ringo's vitality comes from 34 years of marriage to Barbara Bach Star-

key, a Bond girl who he fell in love with on the set of *Caveman*. (Bach was told her co-star would be a short Englishman, and she assumed it was going to be Dudley Moore.) *Caveman* is an underrated – no, seriously – comedy where Ringo plays Atouk, a puppy-dog prehistoric man not unlike the puppy-dog drummer walking alone, kicking stones along the Thames in *A Hard Day's Night*. Sure, Ringo will tell you *Hard Day's* director Richard Lester gave him screen time because he was the only one who showed up, and his brooding silence is only because he was too hung over to remember his lines. Not bloody likely. Ringo had a vulnerability that the other Beatles lacked.

"I don't want to bring in the violins, but we all came from hardship," says McCartney. "All of us except for George lost someone. I lost my mum when I was 14. John lost his mum. But Ringo had it worst. His

"We all came from hardship," says McCartney. "But Ringo had it worst. He built the strongest shield."

father was gone; he was so sick they told his mum he wasn't going to live. Imagine making up your life from that, in that environment. No family, no school. He had to invent himself. We all had to come up with a shield, but Ringo came up with the strongest shield."

Part of that shield was playing the fool; part of that shield was booze. It led to a lost decade of L.A./London/Monte Carlo partying where Ringo woke up many mornings wondering, "Why are the birds coughing so loudly?" But he's been sober for 26 years, and there's one essential thing that keeps Ringo young: the sticks and the drum kit.

"I'll play with any other musician all night, but I can't do it on my own," Ringo told me as we drove to what he estimated was somewhere between his 800th to 900th gig with the All Starr Band. "I don't find any joy in sitting there by myself." Adds friend and band member Todd Rundgren, "He always plays with a second drummer. I think it was comforting on the first solo tours, but now it's a habit."

Every night before a gig, Ringo stands in the wings, and when his name is called,

he bounds onstage: a sequined Liverpoolian leprechaun. "He is Peter Pan, his face lights up," says Barbara. "He's a boy again when he plays. It doesn't matter how far he has to travel to get to that stage."

Ringo is an only child. He's lost two of his surrogate brothers – Lennon and Harrison – and his best friend, singer-songwriter Harry Nilsson, far before their time. He's watched his solo career get nutty high – seven Top Tens between 1971 and 1975 – and then slide into oblivion. Now he's reached a comfy groove in his golden years with a band that has included everyone from Billy Preston to Levon Helm to the Mr. Mister guy. Ringo is still here, a childish look of resigned wonder on his face at how he has outlasted his friends.

"Some of us made it to the other side," says Ringo in a rare somber moment. "Others didn't. Who knows why?"

But there are some clues. For one, Ringo Starr just wants to bang on the drum all day.

UNPROMPTED, THREE members of Ringo's posse repeat to me the same line with happy awe: "Ringo Starr is a fucking Beatle." As such, things are done a little

differently. I'm asked to meet Ringo for a quick hello at the Van Nuys Airport before the band heads out on a swing that will take it from Birmingham, Alabama, to the Dominican Republic to Sarasota, Florida, and on to Brazil. I'm waiting in the lobby when I get an urgent text from his tour manager: "Just a reminder Ringo doesn't shake hands. He bumps elbows."

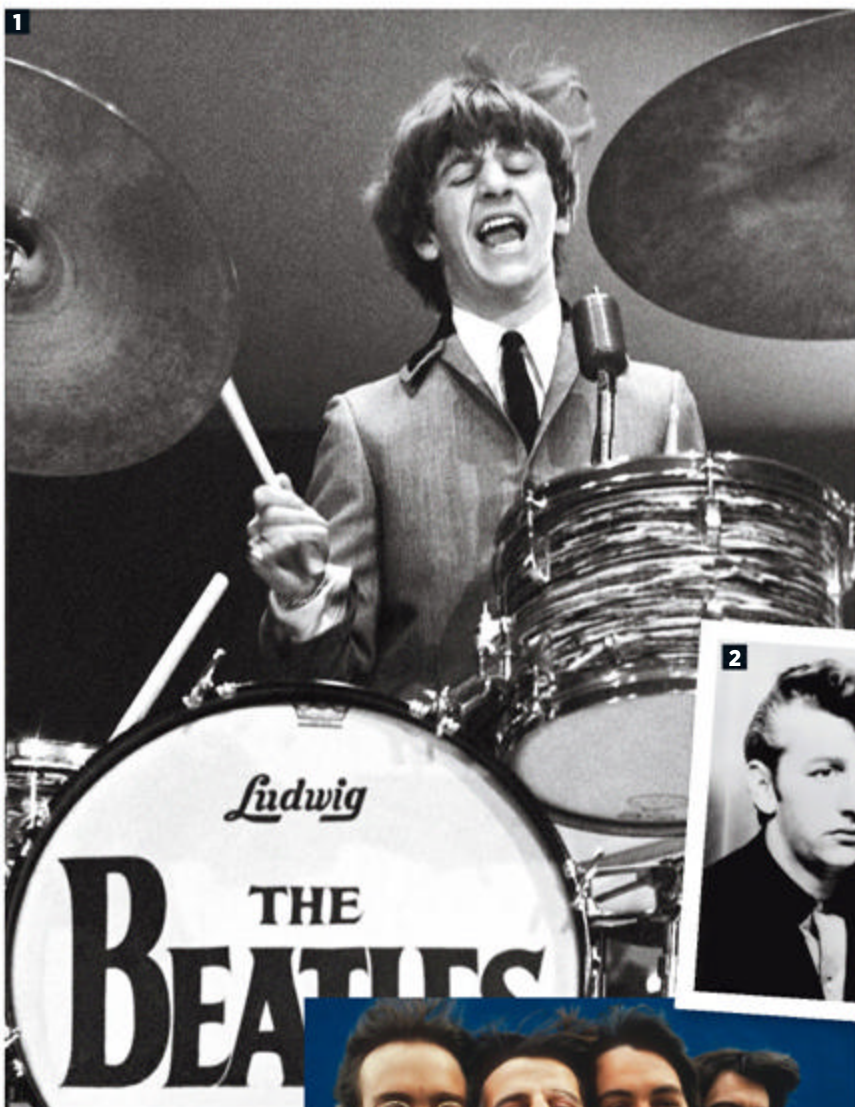
It's a germ thing. Inside a holding room, the band sits, a crack, tight unit waiting for its leader. There are sitcom possibilities. Former members of Toto, Mr. Mister, Journey and David Lee Roth's band mingle, move stiffly in leather and arch aching backs before the flight.

Then Ringo arrives. He is jockey-small, maybe five feet six and 120 pounds. We bump elbows. I joke that this may be his one-millionth interview. He smiles. "Maybe the one-billionth. I passed a million back in the Sixties."

He looks at me with not quite comprehension. (His people may not want to overload him with details.) "Tell me again why you're here? You came to meet me for 15 minutes?" He shakes his head, pauses for a moment and makes a joke: "Fifteen Minutes at the Airport" – that sounds like a romance novel."

He slumps into his chair and reanimates when he starts talking about the band. He nods out toward the Gulfstream GIV. "At this point, we only do it in luxury – private plane and the nicest hotels."

Contributing editor STEPHEN RODRICK wrote about Lizzy Caplan in August 2014.



When We Was Fab

(1) Washington, D.C., 1964, during the Beatles' first trip to America. (2) Liverpool, circa 1959, when he was in his first band, Rory Storm and the Hurricanes. (3) With John, Paul and George in London, July 1968.



The All Starr Band has existed for a quarter century now, and usually Ringo changes the lineup every year or so. This band has been together for three years and has one Ringo-mandated requirement: You must have been in a band with three hit singles. That way, Ringo can add to the illusion that he's just one of the guys and only has to be the frontman for a third of the show.

"Every time I say, 'This is the last tour for these guys,' I add another leg," Ringo says.

Someone comes in and tells him the jet is gassed up and ready to go. He thanks me for not leading with Beatles questions and

then heads into the room where his band waits. The guys break into smiles and surround him, not unlike the Notre Dame football players with their pint-size teammate at the end of *Rudy*.

STARTING WITH HIS BEATLE days, Ringo Starr has always been the mascot of rock & roll. McCartney and Lennon started writing songs for him because everyone found him so adorable. "We wrote the line 'What would you do if I sang out of tune?' for him," says

McCartney. "When you think about it, how many people in rock & roll can sing? But Ringo can deliver a song."

Ringo's image as happy-go-lucky side-man first and rocker second nearly blocked him from entering the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame as a solo act. It started with a dinner between McCartney and Robbie Robertson, when the Band's guitarist noted Ringo wasn't in the Hall of Fame on his own. With Beatles manager Brian Epstein being inducted into the nonperformer wing, McCartney thought Ringo's absence was an egregious oversight.

"I said, 'Let me see what I can do,'" says McCartney. "And I talked to Bruce Springsteen and I talked to Dave Grohl, and they both thought he should be in. And I said I'd do the induction. That took care of it."

Meanwhile, Ringo is on the road and doesn't seem to care. (His people insist he would be happy with a Q&A and skipping

the pain-in-the-assness of a cover story.) The band has survived some arctic weather in South Carolina and Alabama and made it to southern Florida. A gig in Orlando has been rebooked into the 1,200-seat Sunrise Theatre up the highway in Fort Pierce. Even with ticket prices in the hundreds, it's hard to see Ringo making much on the tour with private-plane travel and a half-dozen well-paid hired hands, but since he's one of the world's richest

drummers, with an estimated net worth of hundreds of millions, the bottom line is not a top priority.

Three and a half hours before showtime, a black SUV arrives in the hotel driveway. Ringo appears from a back stairway, is bundled into the car, and the SUV hits the street. At Ringo's request, the windows stay up. Bruce Grakal, Ringo's lawyer, sits in the back. Grakal, a wild, white-haired gent, was also the attorney for Nilsson, the critically acclaimed singer-songwriter known for hits like Three Dog Night's "One" and his own "Everybody's Talkin'" (both in 1969), and his friendship with the Beatles, particularly Lennon and Ringo.

Ringo first met Nilsson after the singer did a gonzo version of Ike and Tina Turner's "River Deep-Mountain High." "It was bordering on madness, and so we thought, 'We gotta meet this guy,'" says Ringo. While Nilsson's destructive friendship with Lennon got the ink — they drunkenly heckled the Smothers Brothers at L.A.'s Troubadour, and Nilsson infamously ruined his voice doing a cover of "Many Rivers to Cross" with Lennon

sitting at the console – it was the drummer in the world's most famous band and the songwriter who hated playing live who became inseparable as they drank away the 1970s.

"He was my best friend," says Ringo softly. "Yeah. I loved Harry."

The two made an unwatchable Dracula movie together and tried to collaborate through their drug-and-booze haze. "I had one song with 27 verses that I gave to Harry to edit, and he got it down to about eight verses," Ringo says. "It never got recorded."

He started ticking off the L.A. places they used to frequent back in the 1970s: the Troubadour, the Whisky and the Rainbow. "We all used to hang out at the Rainbow – me, Harry and Keith Moon," Ringo says. I mentioned I'd seen Marilyn Manson burning the hours there last year, and Ringo laughs.

"Right now he belongs there," he says. He mentioned an encounter with Manson at a John Varvatos fashion party in L.A. last year where Ringo made his debut as a male model. "Marilyn arrived, somehow," says Ringo. "And of course you say hello. He was in party mood. He kept saying, 'Thanks for inviting me.' I didn't invite you! Anyway, yeah, the party goes on, the names just change, you know?"

Ringo doesn't skimp on the recovery details. I mention that during the same era he was lighting up the town, Robertson and Martin Scorsese were blacking out the windows in their L.A. crash pad. He leans toward my tape recorder and says, giggling, "Martin Scorsese? Junkie!"

Ringo and Barbara entered rehab together in 1988. I ask him what finally got him sober. "It gets really lonely, you know?" he says. "It's just really cold and lonely. It's a miserable disease, in the end. There's a crowd of you, and it's lonely. Because that's all you're doing is getting fucked, you know? But I haven't been that lonely since."

Ringo in the 1970s operated in an odd, insulated place in pop culture. With the breakup of the Beatles, expectations for the drummer were basement-low, but he managed a multitude of hits, often collaborating with Lennon and Harrison. There was a sly sense of humor lacking in his ex-bandmates' solo output, and an audacity to songs like "No No Song," an anti-drug hit recorded tongue-in-cheek while Ringo was partying his ass off.

His songs often provided an arch reportorial look into life as a Beatle. In the Lennon-penned "I'm the Greatest," Ringo sang the most Beatlesque "What do we do next?" song, including the lines "Yes, my name is Billy Shears/You know it has been for so many years/Now I'm only 32, and all I want to do is boogaloo." The song fades out to a muted reprise of Harrison's

"I Dig Love." On "Early 1970," Ringo connected the dots even more, writing a verse about each member, stating he missed them all and slagging himself in 143 seconds:

I play guitar, A - D - E

I don't play bass 'cause that's too hard for me

I play the piano if it's in C

And when I go to town I wanna see all three

"It was a time when Paul was angry at us," says Ringo, staring out the window. "So if you listen to the song, it says... about John, 'When he comes to town, I know he's going to play with me.' George's 'long-legged lady... and when he comes to town, I know he's going to play.' And then Paul: 'And I hope he's going to play with me,' because I didn't know if he would, but that's how it happened."

"He's more open and gracious," says friend Rundgren. "Ringo has become the person he wanted to be."

Getting Ringo to talk about the Fab Four is tricky. He says he'll never write a memoir because all anyone wants to read is dirt about the Beatles years, and he's not bringing the shovel. Still, the fans tonight are not coming out to hear Toto songs: They're coming to hear "Yellow Submarine" and "With a Little Help From My Friends." Ringo knows this and isn't afraid to mine nostalgia on his own terms. His new album is called *Postcards From Paradise*, referencing postcards he got from other Beatles on holiday. The title track is essentially a list of Beatles song titles that Ringo wrote on an envelope and gave Rundgren, along with a demo track, to string together into a song.

Even Ringo's rock-star brother-in-law Walsh is a little careful when he brings up the old band. "I'll ask some technical questions – like, 'What guitar was George using on this White Album track?'" says Walsh. "But it's best when you sit back and let him bring it up. I treasure those moments, when Ringo remembers stuff like all of them sitting in a hotel bathroom in Germany, just talking."

In many ways, Ringo is like any other man. He'd rather talk about food than his past. Growing up with a multitude of allergies, Ringo has never had pizza, curry or an onion. But he does love his goat cheese.

"I have goat cheese because of the molecule size," says Ringo, behind sunglasses that he rarely takes off. "You know how you're always full after a glass of milk? You're always full because the molecules are huge. Look at a baby cow. Now, a goat is something our body can handle." He smiles. "And that's why they think I'm a little crazy."

True to Walsh's advice, the less I ask about the Beatles, the more Ringo talks about the Beatles. Ringo is proud he never missed a studio cue, sitting at his drum kit with a cup of tea waiting for the others to suss out what they would play next. But sometimes, he felt isolated. During the White Album sessions, he didn't feel right.

"I went over to see John," Ringo says. "Knocked on the door. And I said, 'Listen, I don't feel like I'm playing great, and I feel that you three are very close.' And he said, 'I thought it was you three.' And then I went to Paul, and I said the same thing: 'I don't feel like I'm playing great, and I feel you three are really close.' And he goes, 'I thought it was you three!' So I went, 'Fuck, I'm leaving. It's too crazy now.'"

Ringo left for about 10 days and went to Sardinia with his kids and hung out on Peter Sellers' boat. He ordered fish and chips, and the crew brought him squid instead. Ringo started asking the captain about octopus and was told they like to lie on the ocean floor and build a garden of shiny objects.

"And I thought, 'How great is that?'" Ringo says. "I thought, 'I'd love to be... it'd be very quiet down there, maybe stop your head chattering.' And so I started writing the song: 'I'd like to be in an octopus' garden. All my friends would be there.'"

When Ringo returned, Harrison had covered his drum set in flowers. But the band would be finished two years later, in 1970. With the deaths of John and George, only Paul and Ringo remain. They have a twisty relationship, sometimes testy, sometimes one they lampoon.

"It's family," says McCartney. "Sometimes we get pissed off at each other. I'll want something from him and he won't give it to me, and I'll get pissed off. But then it passes. Brothers fight sometimes. There's this revisionist history that it was all John and Paul. But it was four corners of a square; it wouldn't have worked without one of the sides. Ringo was the right angle."

In 2011, the two shot a comedy video for a British charity where McCartney insists as the only Beatle left he must go on a mis-

sion of mercy. At the end, Ringo pops up on a TV screen and says, "What about me?"

"Paul said he's going to do the Hall of Fame speech," says Ringo. He then speaks in dry British wit. "I really think I'm doing it just to give Paul a night out. He likes to keep busy." He pauses before turning serious. "But the other side of that coin is that we would not have made as many records if it hadn't have been for Paul. John and I lived very close, and we could get lazy. And Paul would call: 'Hey, lads. Time we went back in the studio.' So we've got to thank him that you've got 12 records."

The SUV pulls into Fort Pierce, but Ringo isn't done talking about Paul.

"When Stu Sutcliffe left the band, we needed a bass player," Ringo says. "And John certainly wasn't going to play bass, and neither was George. So Paul did it. And he played incredible bass. People think, 'Oh, that's easy,' but the bass player and the drummer have to be friends, you know?"

A few minutes later, the SUV parks near the stage door. A half-century of paparazzi and the murder of Lennon have put Ringo on permanent alert. His eyes dart around, but there's no one there as he speed-walks for the door. A few minutes later, he is onstage for a sound-check. He taps the microphone. An old colleague is still on his mind.

"OK, the first song we're going to do is 'Yesterday.'"

Ringo laughs. "No, not really."

IT'S AN HOUR BEFORE SHOWTIME, and Ringo is hanging with the band members in the theater's catering area. This wouldn't have happened in the early days of the All Starr Band. To avoid temptation, Ringo and Barbara would jump into a waiting car immediately after the show. They would return to the hotel and hole up with television and a little ice cream. Half the band was in recovery looking for meetings. They would have one backstage if they couldn't find one, while the other band members maintained their more traditional pre-show libations.

"At first, Ringo was very insular," says Rundgren, who was on one of the early All Starr Band tours, in 1992, as well as the

current one. "Imagine if you went from a working-class kid to royalty. It got to be a habit for him, not relating to people and slipping back into the celebrity mentality. Now, he's much more open and gracious with our guests and us. He's become the person he wanted to be."

Right now, he's sprawled at the dining room table and taking the piss out of his Beatles-era drumming.

"You know that fill I do on 'The End' on *Abbey Road*?" asks Ringo. He starts beating out a bop-bop beat on the table,

on Ringo and never have to worry. He both gave you security and you knew he was going to nail it."

"Few drummers can capture the feel of a song like Ringo," says Rundgren. "A lot of drummers are on top of the beat, which gives the song a nervous, edgy feel. That's not Ringo. He plays relaxed, and it sounds so natural."

Perhaps the reason Ringo could never remember the solo on "The End" is he didn't want to do it. "I never met a drummer who more hated the drum solos," says McCartney. "We had to beg him to do it. The point where 'Carry That Weight' goes into 'The End,' I told him it's a dramatic change in energy and tempo – we need just a few seconds. And he finally agreed to do it. And Ringo was great."

A little later, we are in Ringo's dressing room. Outside, Rundgren pulls on a psychedelic shirt and Toto's Steve Lukather checks his pirate pants in the mirror. "Where else would I get to wear these?" Lukather asks no one in particular. Ringo checks a voicemail from Steven Van Zandt, who wants to feature on his radio

show the song "Rory and the Hurricanes," about Ringo's first band, which leads off his new album. Van Zandt has just a few edits he wants to make. Ringo, ever the good soldier, laughs a little and calls him back and tells him whatever he wants to do is fine with him. After he hangs up, I dare to ask how sick he is of answering questions about eight years of his life that are now a half-century in the past. He sighs with a huff of resignation, but he knows there's no escaping it.

"Yeah, but that's what they do," says Ringo. "I had a life before I joined, and I've certainly had a life after that. But...like you, you can't help but ask me about the Beatles. You've got to do that. I understand."

It's probably the best attitude to have. A few years ago, Ringo and Barbara were on vacation in a small town in India. They took a walk. Suddenly, little Indian boys and girls clutching Beatles albums surrounded them. There's no escaping those years, no matter where Ringo goes.

An assistant brings dinner. It is a mountain of broccoli and half a baked potato. Ringo smiles and waves the room clear.

"OK, off you go."

Ringo eats alone.

THE BAND TAKES ITS PLACE. AN announcer says, "Ladies and gentleman, please welcome Ringo [Cont. on 62]"



Two of Us

(1) With McCartney in New York, 2009. (2) With wife Barbara Bach Starkey at the Sundance Film Festival, 2013. (3) Ringo and Harry Nilsson, 1975. "He was my best friend," says Ringo.

a facsimile of the original, sort of.

Ringo smiles. "I've got no idea how to do it. I could never do it again." He looks triumphant. "Can't do it!"

McCartney says it didn't matter. He remembers the first show the Beatles did with Ringo, in 1962, at the Cavern in Liverpool, was when they became a real band.

"The first few minutes that Ringo is playing, I look to the left at George and to the right to John, and we didn't say a word, but I remember thinking, 'Shit, this is amazing,'" says McCartney. He paused to think for a second and then gave an impolitic example. "Look, I love Led Zeppelin, but you watch them playing and you can see them looking back at John Bonham, like, 'What the hell are you doing – this is the beat.' You could turn your back

THE CHILDREN OF ISIS

WHY DID THREE AMERICAN KIDS FROM THE SUBURBS OF CHICAGO TRY TO RUN AWAY TO THE ISLAMIC STATE, AND SHOULD THE FEDS TREAT THEM AS TERRORISTS?

BY JANET REITMAN

ILLUSTRATION BY PATRICK CONCEPCIÓN

ON THE DAY HE PLANNED TO MAKE HIS SACRED journey, or *hijra*, to the Islamic State, 19-year-old Mohammed Hamzah Khan woke up before dawn at his house in the Chicago suburb of Bolingbrook, Illinois, and walked to the nearby mosque to pray. It was Saturday, October 4th, 2014, an unusually cold morning, though Hamzah, a slender young man with a trimmed black beard, was dressed for warmer weather in jeans, boots and a gray sweatshirt. By sunset, he'd be gone for good: leaving his parents, his friends, his country and all he knew for an unknown future in the "blessed land of Shaam," as he called Syria. He would be taking his teenage brother and sister with him. *Allahu Akbar*, he prayed with the men in his family, and tried to banish his doubts: "God is great." ■ Upstairs in her

لا إله إلا الله

الله
رسول
محمد



bedroom in the Khans' small two-story house, Hamzah's 17-year-old sister, Mariyam*, finished her own prayers. *Ameen*. Then, dressed in a long tunic and flowing pants, she wrapped a dark head scarf around her wavy black hair and waited for her brothers to come home. A delicate girl, Mariyam has flashing dark eyes, perfect skin and a radiant smile that, as a *niqabi*, a woman who veils her face, almost no one other than her family ever sees. Soon, if all went according to plan, Mariyam would likely be married to a jihadi. She inspected her skin for any sign of a stray pimple. What would her husband be like? She hoped he was handsome and bearded, like Hamzah.

When the men returned from the mosque just before 6 a.m., Mariyam waited until she heard her father go back to bed. Then, with just a small window of time before her parents woke up, she stuffed some pillows under the covers to make it look like she was still asleep and reviewed her mental checklist: clothes (five days' worth), boots, warm socks, a toothbrush, a hairbrush, her niqab, hijab, Quran and two wands of Maybelline Great Lash mascara (just in case she ran out). She put on a black abaya, topped with her favorite leopard-print hoodie, and took a last look at her room. Then, grabbing her suitcase, she walked downstairs, slipped out the door with her brothers, and sped off toward the airport in a taxi.

The three Khan siblings (*ROLLING STONE has agreed to change the names of the younger two, since they are minors) had been plotting their journey since the spring, communicating online with people they believed to be ISIS sympathizers in Syria. During that time, they'd secretly acquired passports, visas and, in just the past week, three airplane tickets to Istanbul, totaling more than \$2,600, purchased with money Hamzah had saved from his job at a home-supply store. Once in Turkey, the plan was to make their way, by bus, from Istanbul to the city of Adana, a trip of some 12 hours. There, they'd call a number they had been given by an ISIS supporter they'd met online. "And then, uh, I don't know," Hamzah later admitted to the FBI.

What services Hamzah intended to offer ISIS were unclear, even to him. According to a rough transcript admitted at his detention hearing, Hamzah later told the FBI that he wanted to play a "public-service role" – delivering food, perhaps, or being a policeman. Maybe "a combat role,"

he said, uncertain what exactly he'd do in that capacity. Hamzah had never even held a gun, let alone fired one. His ideology was simple: He wanted to help the Muslims. He never intended to return to the U.S.

"An Islamic State has been established, and it is thus obligatory upon every able-bodied male and female to migrate," Hamzah had written in a letter he left for his parents, explaining why he was leaving the comforts of suburbia for the *khilafah*, or caliphate. "I cannot live under a law in which I am afraid to speak my beliefs."

His 16-year-old brother, Tarek*, took a more strident tone. "This nation is openly against Islam and Muslims," he wrote in his own goodbye letter. "The evil of this country makes me sick."

There was a sameness to the letters, as if they'd been copied from a script. All referenced America's wars in the Muslim world and said they felt responsible for the suffering. "I simply cannot sit here and let my brothers and sisters get killed with my own hard-earned money," Hamzah said.

"Living in this land is *haram* [sinful]," said Tarek, who like his brother – a pizza fanatic who loved Comedy Central and Lil

Customs officials, who then passed them over to the FBI. By that evening, Hamzah was put under arrest and charged with "knowingly attempting to provide material support and resources" to a foreign terrorist organization in the form of personnel – namely, himself. If convicted, he faces up to 15 years in prison, and possibly more if other charges are added.

Hamzah's prosecution comes at a time when countering the lure of groups like ISIS has become one of Washington's top priorities. "We have investigations of people in various stages of radicalizing in all 50 states," FBI director James Comey said recently. Though it is unknown precisely how federal authorities came to target the Khans, it's no secret that government informants lurk online. Agents customarily make these cases by gathering intelligence and setting traps for unsuspecting targets, many of whom, like Hamzah, are arrested at the airport. According to Fordham Law School's Center on National Security, 33 people in the United States have been detained or questioned in the past year for attempting to aid or join ISIS. Most of these cases have involved kids in their late teens and early twenties. In the case of three Denver-area high school girls, who managed to make it all the way to Frankfurt before being spotted by German authorities and returned to the U.S., the youngest was just 15. Twenty-four cases so far have resulted in federal charges, though, as juvenile records are sealed, it is possible that even more teenagers have been investigated without the public's knowledge.

The Obama administration has acknowledged a key challenge is countering ISIS's effective social-media messaging – so much so, one Justice Department official recently conceded, that the DOJ is looking into ways it might prosecute those voicing support for ISIS on Twitter. "It's a war of ideas – we ought to be able to win," Assistant Attorney General John Carlin noted during a recent talk. Yet he admitted the government doesn't yet have a cohesive strategy. "How do we explain that an ideology that's based on enslaving other people, killing women and children, and is fundamentally nihilistic is one you shouldn't join?"

Though the government has put forth a number of so-called countering violent-extremism initiatives, the most effective tool at the moment seems to be the criminal justice system. Most of these cases, and nearly 200 more brought since 9/11, rest on a broad interpretation of a provision in the federal criminal code known as the material-support statutes. They criminalize a wide range of activities, from supplying weapons, money, personnel or training to providing things like humanitarian relief, conflict-resolution training, and other "expert advice or assistance."

"All the material-support law requires is that the person supported a group or set

"AMERICA IS OPENLY AGAINST MUSLIMS," ONE OF THE KHAN SIBLINGS WROTE HIS PARENTS. "THE EVIL OF THIS COUNTRY MAKES ME SICK."

Wayne – complained about the immorality of Western society. All three wrote of eschewing the *dunya*, or material world (even though "what I love most is comfort," Tarek admitted), and provided they made it safely, hoped their parents might even join them. True, the area was getting bombed, said Hamzah, "but let us not forget we weren't put on this Earth for comfort."

They begged their parents not to call the police. "All of us will be in really great danger if you do so," Mariyam wrote in her own letter. "By the time you are reading this, we could be captured, or stranded, or possibly even killed," she added. "I swear this is the hardest thing I've ever done."

IN THE AFTERNOON OF OCTOBER 4th, federal authorities were on the lookout for the Khan teens as they passed through security screening at O'Hare International Airport. At the gate area for Austrian Airlines, the siblings were pulled aside and questioned by U.S.

Contributing editor JANET REITMAN wrote about the Tea Party in October.



THE FAMILY

Hamzah (above) is the oldest of five kids born to Shafi and Zarine Khan (right), naturalized U.S. citizens from India. Hamzah became radicalized online and believed America was at war with Muslims. "I cannot live where I'm afraid to speak my beliefs," he wrote.



of ideas the government doesn't like," explains David Cole, a professor at Georgetown University Law School and author of *Less Safe, Less Free: Why America Is Losing the War on Terror*. "It is an extremely broad statute, and prosecutors like broad statutes because it's easier to make a case. The risk is you very likely will send a lot of people who would never have committed violence at all to prison for a long time."

According to federal prosecutors, Hamzah Khan and his siblings felt a "religious obligation to join the Islamic State.... with the hopes of violent jihad." At Hamzah's detention hearing in November, Assistant U.S. Attorney Matthew Hiller argued that the teens' "carefully calculated plan to abandon their family.... and abandon their country and join a foreign terrorist organization" showed, at minimum, their "radicalization." Hiller also argued that Hamzah be kept in pretrial detention to "protect the safety of the community from the defendant and his intent on leaving Western society and joining ISIL."

Nowhere in this statement is the assertion that Hamzah's intent to join the Islamic State also means that he intended to commit harm in the United States. This fear, however, lies at the heart of both the Khan case and virtually all of the other ISIS-related prosecutions, though there is so far little evidence that those who have made it to Syria plan to come home. "What they're doing is joining a civil war," says Michael German, a former FBI agent and now a fellow at NYU's Brennan Center for Justice. "And we have seen people do that through history—whether it was the Spanish Civil War, whether it was American Jews going off to fight for Israel, or American Catholics wanting to join the IRA. But rather than understand the lure in context, we judge it as they're going to go over and become a terrorist. And then, the next leap is they're going to become a terrorist against the United States."

Hamzah's attorney, Tom Durkin, believes the government's zeal to prosecute has more to do with the fear of "missing

one," as he puts it, than in a genuine belief that people like Hamzah are dangerous. "The fact is, these kids are not 'terrorists' by any criminal-justice definition," says Durkin. "The problem is, it's now part of the 'war on terror,' and as soon as you declare war on something, that means you have to defeat it."

Mariyam's attorney, Marlo Cadeddu, believes that if the Khan kids are guilty of anything, it's a form of magical thinking. "They were naive, and they were sheltered, and they bought into a fantasy of a Muslim utopia," she says. "It's hard to be an observant Muslim teenager growing up in post-9/11 America, and ISIS plays on those insecurities in a very calculated way."

CHICAGO'S MUSLIM COMMUNITY is one of the oldest and largest in the United States, with a significant portion hailing from the South Asian diaspora. Hamzah's parents, Shafi and Zarine, naturalized American citizens, were born in Hyderabad, the fourth-largest city in India, and are followers of the Deobandi school of Islam, a fundamentalist Sunni strain that stresses strict adherence to Islamic law and has been influential in jihadist networks in Pakistan and Afghanistan. The Khans, however, follow a pacifist movement that preaches that Muslims' true battle is a spiritual one.

An unassuming young man, Shafi was 20 when he arrived in Chicago with his parents, in 1986. In 1994, he returned to India for an arranged marriage with Zarine, then a 21-year-old student at Hyderabad's main university. Back in Chicago, the couple settled on Devon Avenue, an area famous for being a landing point for immigrants from across the Indian subcontinent. In 1995, their first child, Hamzah, was born, followed by Mariyam in 1996, Tarek in 1998 and another sister in 2000. To support his brood, Shafi, who was still putting himself through college, worked as a customer-service representative at a bank. Zarine, who'd given up her scientific ambitions to marry and have children, worked part-time teaching primary school. By 2005, they joined the migration pattern of many other Indian and Pakistani Muslims and settled in the suburbs west of the city, first in Des Plaines, near O'Hare, and then, after their fifth and final child was born in 2011, in Bolingbrook.

Chicago's western suburbs have a drab, workaday quality filled with featureless strip malls and equally nondescript homes. Once lily-white, the area's demographics have followed national trends, and South Asians now comprise almost six percent of the population. In the past decade, at least 15 new mosques and Islamic cultural centers have sprung up throughout the area, quickly assimilating into the landscape: mosque, 7-Eleven, McDonald's, church,

Walmart, halal butcher, Taco Bell, synagogue, Planet Fitness.

Uninspiring though it might be, the Khans found much to appreciate in the suburbs. In America, you got what you paid for: a house, a car, clean streets, medical care. They appreciated the kindness of Americans and, as Zarine often noted, their “respect for hard work and human life.” And yet, neither she nor her husband was ever fully comfortable here. The violence of popular culture in particular bothered Zarine. When Hamzah was about eight, the television broke; the Khans decided not to replace it. Though they had a computer with Internet access, Shafi and Zarine monitored their children’s online habits, allowing them to watch cartoons and read the news, but never to surf the Internet alone. “We wanted to preserve their innocence,” Zarine later noted to the *Washington Post*.

On September 11th, 2001, Zarine and Shafi had been living together in Chicago for seven years. Hamzah was six, Mariyam four; the younger two siblings were toddlers. The Khans, who were horrified by the attacks, tried not to watch the news. Sometimes, Zarine would hear about women’s scarves getting pulled off in public, though it never happened to her. She did, however, get random stares while shopping. Given what happened on 9/11, that was “understandable,” she rationalized. But in Chicago, as in most cities across the country, there were more overt examples of discrimination. Everyone had heard the stories of people who had been hassled or detained at the airport, or whose immigration papers were mysteriously held up. Many Muslim families knew of at least one child who’d been teased and called “Osama” or “terrorist” on the playground. It was assumed, in an era of FBI stings (including several in Chicago), that if a stranger entered a mosque during Friday prayers and started spouting extremist rhetoric, he was likely an informant.

Instead of sending their kids to public schools, the Khans enrolled their children in an Islamic primary school, and later in the College Preparatory School of America (CPSA), a private Islamic day school that bills itself as providing “academic excellence in an Islamic environment.” Mohammad Chaudhry, a friend of the Khans and a former board member of their mosque, also sends his kids to CPSA, which he feels has helped instill in them the proper Islamic values. But it’s also a safety issue, he admits. “To be honest with you, I don’t want my kids being told they’re terrorists.”

The problem with this approach, notes Ahmed Rehab, executive director of the Chicago branch of the Council on American Islamic Relations, is by “cocooning” one’s children in Islamic schools, parents run the risk of setting them up for profound isolation. When they emerge, he asks, “will the kids be prepared for what they see?”

By all accounts, the Khans enveloped their children in a tight and loving cocoon. Other parents would remark on the manners and obedience of the Khan kids, who got good grades, volunteered at the mosque religious school, day care and summer camp, and were relentlessly polite and helpful. Religion played a central role in their lives, and they made an effort to pray five times a day. But they were also

ticularly those from the South Asian community, to put their kids through this program, which is both a sign of piety and great prestige. As Hamzah spoke only English and Urdu, however, he had little idea what the words, in Arabic, actually meant.

Of the Khan kids, Hamzah was probably the most sensitive, a dreamer. He loved to draw and had a particular soft spot for children, serving as treasurer of his school’s UNICEF chapter. The stories of refugee families in places like Syria, Gaza or Sudan moved him so much that he decided to become a pediatrician so he could work with Doctors Without Borders. But he quickly realized he couldn’t endure eight years of medical school, and

THE SOCIAL-MEDIA JIHADISTS



THE MARTYR

Ifthekar Jaman, a British citizen who joined ISIS in 2013, became a social-media sensation, regaling his followers with the glory of jihad. He was killed in his first battle.



THE BIG SISTER

A 20-year-old Scottish woman, Umm Layth, wrote detailed advice for girls looking to move to Syria, promising that “all those who have left their luxuries behind will be taken care of.”



THE ADVOCATE

Abu Baraa, a British citizen, preaches Islamic doctrine online. Baraa told Hamzah that it was better to live a single day in obedience to the caliph than “to live and die in [ignorance].”

regular American kids who grew up on a steady diet of cartoons, Marvel superhero comics and young-adult fiction: *The Lightning Thief*, the *Maximum Ride* series, the *Legend* trilogy. Mariyam, who as a child loved *Muslim Scouts Adventures*, a cartoon series broadcast on the Islamic-themed website MuslimVille.tv, was also partial to the very American animated hero Kim Possible. Hamzah loved Batman. Their brother Tarek idolized Wolverine. Anime fanatics, they were desperate to learn Japanese and, at one point, created their own fake Japanese language, which they used as a secret code.

When Hamzah was 10, he left school and enrolled in a local Islamic institute to memorize the Quran, a process known as becoming a hafiz. He spent roughly two and a half years learning the 600-page text in Arabic, until the phrases rolled off his tongue like poetry. It’s not uncommon in highly religious Muslim families, par-

after graduating from high school in 2013 and enrolling at Benedictine University, he decided to study engineering and computer science. By October of his freshman year, it seemed that he was already feeling the pressure. “Calc and Chem exams, back-to-back,” he tweeted one day. “Need duas [prayers]!!”

One of Hamzah’s teachers at CPSA, who spoke to *ROLLING STONE* anonymously (the school has refused to comment on the Khans and has instructed its faculty to do the same), doubts Hamzah had the skills needed for a scientific career. “He wasn’t cut out for engineering,” he says. “He always came across as really naive, just kind of simple.” Sexual innuendos went over his head. Though he had a circle of friends, he lacked the go-along-to-get-along sensibility that others took in stride. According to the teacher, cheating has occasionally been a problem at CPSA, where tremendous pressure is put on kids to excel in the sci-

ences, but Hamzah never took part. “That’s part of that innocence,” he says. “The rest of the kids are like, ‘Look, you can’t always be this goody-two-shoes.’”

Hamzah saw in Islam a world of infinite wisdom whose rules and ancient history intrigued him. Steeped in the stories of Muhammad, his companions, and the sultans and caliphs who came after them, Hamzah viewed those days as a “simpler” era when Islam flourished across a vast empire, or Caliphate, and the Muslim *ummah*, or global community, was united. By college, though he still enjoyed making funny videos with friends and listening to rappers like Waka Flocka Flame, he’d begun to see those pursuits as shallow, lacking the honor and romance of being a true champion of the ummah. In 2014, he created a Tumblr page he called “Torchbearers of Tawheed,” dedicated to “posts about important events and people from Islam dating from the period of Muhammad [peace be upon him],” though he sometimes posted his own poetry, too. On Twitter, he dubbed himself @lionofthed3s3rt – a take on his name, which means “lion,” and a reference to historical freedom fighters in the Middle East. He trimmed his beard in the manner of an Arabian prince, and then, because it looked so good, he posted a picture on his Google+ page, standing in front of a suburban home, his black hair wrapped in a Saudi-style headdress, chin raised, eyes fixed on some distant point. Mecca? Chicago? Burger King? Who knew?

MARIYAM, WHILE EQUALLY invested in her dreams, was more focused. A voracious reader, she made her way through most of the young-adult novels on *The New York Times* Best Sellers list, and spent hours making plans. She was going to be an astronaut. Then she decided she’d rather be a paleontologist, or a surgeon. Like her brother, she also became a hafiz, which in her case took three years, as she was meticulous about the Quran, memorizing each phrase and passage backward and forward until she could recite it without error. “I like things to be perfect, and I like to be the best at them,” she says. This was obvious by simply looking at her, if she’d have allowed it.

Though wearing the niqab isn’t generally required in Islam, Mariyam, like her mother, chose to cover all but her forehead and her eyes. In public, Mariyam, a tiny five feet two, appeared as a mute appendage to Zarine, to whom she is fiercely attached. But at home, where she covered only her hair, she was a different, more dynamic girl: intellectually curious, chatty, sometimes angst-ridden and moody. She was concerned about the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. She worried about the suf-

fering of Muslims – especially the children – wherever they were. She also worried about the usual teenage things: her hair, her skin, her weight. Embarrassingly, she now admits, she was obsessed for a while – OK, for about three years – with Linkin Park, whose lyrics she memorized and wrote everywhere. There were also the boys-suck ballads of Taylor Swift, more of a secret passion. Boys themselves were strictly off-limits in the hyperconservative interpretation of Islam imparted by her parents. She could still laugh, joke, ride bikes and climb trees with her brothers, but once she hit puberty, strange boys were to be avoided unless she needed to ask someone for directions.

This, for the most part, was OK, be-

ZARINE KHAN ENDED HER SON’S HEARING WITH A MESSAGE TO ISIS LEADER ABU BAKR AL-BAGHDADI AND HIS RECRUITERS: “LEAVE OUR CHILDREN ALONE!”

cause more than anything, Mariyam was painfully shy. Her niqab was her shield, and behind the veil she could observe, which she did, keenly, but didn’t have to engage. This shyness, combined with her innate perfectionism, created a deep well of anxiety that struck her immediately after she finished memorizing the Quran. She’d missed the entirety of middle school, though she’d tried to keep up through home-schooling. As a result, all the torment of those awkward early-teenage years, the best-friendships, rivalries and petty jealousies – all of that had passed her by. So she told her mother she didn’t want to go back to school. Zarine begged her to change her mind. “I used to tell her every single day, ‘You’re going to regret this when you’re in college,’” Zarine recalls. “‘You’re going to say, ‘I missed high school life.’”” Mariyam insisted she’d be better off being home-schooled and enrolled in a correspondence program. And so, ninth grade passed and then 10th.

Apart from her studies, her outlets were baking, drawing and watching YouTube videos. She developed a passion for elaborate Arabic eye makeup, which she’d experiment with in her room, trying the Indian-princess look one day, a sultry Arabian look the next, always making sure to take it off before anyone could see. Though she never admitted it, the loneli-

ness was excruciating. After a while, even a trip with her mother to Walmart was exciting.

And then, at 16, Mariyam began to change. She stopped listening to music, stopped watching anime and reading novels. She no longer missed her friends or worried about whether she should return to high school – she knew there was no point. The only thing that mattered to her was religion. While her brothers and sister were off at school and working on projects for the next science fair, she would rush through her lessons in order to curl up in a corner and read the *hadiths*, the second-hand accounts of the teachings and proverbs of Muhammad, as well as books by many other Islamic scholars.

Her favorite heroes were men like Muhammad al-Fatih, Muhammad bin Qasim and Saladin – all famous Muslim warriors who waged valiant jihad in defense of Islam and its expansion. The term “jihad” refers to two distinct Islamic concepts – the greater jihad, or the daily struggle to live a godly life, and the lesser jihad, which most scholars agree refers to war, and not just a spiritual or existential one.

Mariyam envisioned herself as less a warrior than a protector. In her private musings, she could take on a fierce edge, frustrated by the refusal of American Muslims to even mention jihad for fear of being misunderstood. “When talk of jihad comes up, [the men] turn their faces away, or look down and avoid your eyes, or attack you,” she wrote in an undated note, referring to the men of her community as “cowards” and the women as “selfish.” The righteous path was clear to her; why would none of them see it? “They don’t want to believe,” she said. “They lash out at you, mock you, and ridicule what the best people on the face of this Earth loved and carried out with passion flaming in their hearts. Will they say the same when it is their children whose skulls are being crushed, their husbands who are being tortured, their fathers who are slaughtered, and their mothers who are raped?”

For, if that level of violence seemed far-fetched in America, it wasn’t the case in Syria, or Iraq. And maybe it wasn’t even that far off in Chicago. In 2012, there had been a hate crime at CPSA, when a 7-Up bottle filled with acid was hurled at the building during Ramadan prayers. That same year, the area’s U.S. congressman, Republican Joe Walsh, noted while campaigning for re-election that Muslims were “trying to kill Americans every week” in the United States. A few days later, a man terrorized an area mosque with a pellet gun.

For some Muslim kids, the prejudice, discrimination and violence only reinforced what they may have felt all along. "If you're a Muslim-American teenager, America has been at war with the Muslims for as long as you've been conscious," says Omer Mozaffar, an Islamic scholar and Muslim chaplain at Loyola University in Chicago. "That's just the frame around how they see the world. It's on the news, it's online, it's on your Xbox – I mean, just look at Call of Duty, where they are fighting the Muslims in Iraq and Afghanistan. It's just in the air."

And yet, what could Mariyam, or Hamzah, or any other disaffected Muslim teenager do about it? There were thousands just like them on Twitter and Facebook, a whole universe of kids who debated the hadiths, and talked about anime, and agonized over the latest atrocity in Syria, and also shared pictures of lions, or dinosaurs, or baby tigers, or their baby sisters. They came from the same drab sort of wastelands as Bolingbrook: from Perth, and Cardiff, and Manchester, and Portsmouth, and the immigrant ghettos of London, as well as those in cities like Paris, Berlin, Brussels, Minneapolis, Denver – and many of them were born in these cities, too. And yet they never felt fully American, or British, or Australian, or French (even though they were), but they also didn't feel totally "Muslim" either, or at least not like the lions and lionesses of Islam they thought they should be.

"Brothers and sisters, the pain is real," one supposed witness to Syrian bloodshed wrote on his widely read blog, issuing a siren call to all the *akhis* and *ukhtis*, or brothers and sisters, in the *dar al-kufr*, or land of disbelief, who yearned to be in the *dar al-Islam*, or land of Islam – wherever that was. "News of atrocities no longer reach us by the week or by the day. Instead, we hear of new massacres, transgressions and oppression against our brothers and sisters in faith, every couple of hours of every day. If you are tired of and cannot bear seeing, reading, hearing of and witnessing those atrocities anymore, then, undeniably, the time has come for you to act."

An unprecedented number of young Muslims heeded the call. "I swear by the one who holds my soul in his hands, I will not give this up even if the entire world turns against me," Mariyam wrote, with all the passion her 17-year-old heart could muster.

MARIYAM KHAN SPENT most of every day alone, "thinking," she wrote on her Ask.fm page. While perusing Islamic forums, she discovered Kalamullah.com, a British-based Islamic website that aggregates a wide range of Islamic material. Those looking to read or listen to the

speeches of American-born cleric Anwar al-Awlaki can do so there, but Kalamullah also posts information from various human rights groups, and, perhaps of particular resonance for Mariyam, a link to daily video updates from Syria.

By 2013, Mariyam had become immersed in the crisis in Syria, or Shaam, as she now called it, which is also what the Islamic State called the territory – encompassing large swaths of Syria and Iraq – that it would later dub the caliphate. Taking the cause as her own, she joined in a hashtag campaign for a Muslim prisoner and retweeted photos of victims of violence in the Middle East. She was influenced by



"ISIS'S MESSAGE IS, 'COME AND HELP US BUILD A UTOPIA THAT WILL PROTECT EVERY SINGLE MUSLIM,' SAYS ONE EXPERT. 'THIS IS VERY, VERY SEDUCTIVE.'"

Islamic forums that promoted a stridently anti-Western view – all non-Muslims were "*kuffars*," all Shias "apostates," and all mainstream imams, Islamic scholars and virtually any Muslims who "watered down their religion" were "coconuts": brown on the outside, but white at the heart.

Though ISIS promoted a hitherto unknown pageant of cinematic brutality to the world, believers like Hamzah and Mariyam were hearing a different message. By declaring the "caliphate," ISIS leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi was fulfilling a dream cherished by generations of Muslims and Islamic leaders, including Osama bin Laden, who saw it as a long-term goal, albeit one that might take generations to realize. In his first video appearance as self-appointed caliph, Baghdadi issued a direct call to not just fighters, but also doctors, judges, engineers and experts in Islamic law to help build the new "Islamic State," where all Muslims were now obligated to go. This is a vastly different message from what previous iterations of jihadis have promoted, noted Loretta Napoleani, author of a new book on ISIS, *The Islamist Phoenix*. "In the old days, Al Qaeda was sending a negative message, which was 'Come be suicide bombers and live in paradise with 72 virgins,'" Napoleani said at a recent talk in New York. "This time, the message is 'Come and help us build a new state, your state... a Sunni political utopia... that will

protect every single Muslim....' This is a very, very seductive message, and it's also a positive message."

All of the Khan kids were active on social media, but for Mariyam, it was more than just an outlet – it was her voice. Mariyam's life was full of rules, but online she could be anyone she wanted to be: a good Muslim girl, an advocate for the oppressed, even, in a way, an honorary boy who, veiled in the anonymity of the Internet, was free to engage with a bubbling new subculture of people, mostly young men, who she'd never have been able to look at, let alone speak to, in real life.

She found them on Twitter, sometimes identified by the black jihadist flag they used as their avatar and their noms de guerre that began with "Abu," for men, and "Umm," for women, occasionally with their nationality tacked to the end of their names: al-Amriki, for Americans; al-Britani, for the Brits. As Mariyam observed, and later took part in, they engaged in lengthy conversations with their followers, debating the value of various jihadist groups, promoting the latest ISIS video or heroic *nasheed*, and, if you were

lucky, the most influential of this group, who served as unofficial recruiters, might send you their personal Kik or Surespot handles so you could continue the conversation more securely.

Getting to that point required that one show loyalty to the cause, which Mariyam did, tweeting her love for videos like "Saleel al-Sawarim IV" ["The Clanging of the Swords IV"], which heralded ISIS's operations in Iraq and featured scenes of foreign fighters burning their passports, as well as executions and a beheading. During her brother's detention hearing, federal prosecutors noted Mariyam's "twisted delight" at the ending of "Saleel al-Sawarim," which she tweeted about with emoticons of a heart and a smiley face.

To converse with ISIS jihadis, Mariyam also had to understand their language. According to the University of Wisconsin-Madison's Dr. Amanda Rogers, who studies ISIS propaganda, the English-speaking ISIS network has its own vernacular of Arabic buzzwords that followers use, interspersed with Western terms, as a sort of in-group code. Those who made it to Syria were "on the *haqq*," or living the truth. They might also be "on the *deen*," a term, referencing a person's faith, that meant embracing it fully, with body and soul, as Muslims did during the days of the Prophet. To travel to Syria was to make *hijra*, or migration, referring to the original journey of Muhammad and his followers to Medi-

na and inextricably tied to the idea of persecution; indeed, one of the conditions that makes hijra mandatory for Muslims is oppression by the country or system under which they live. Hence, a decision to make hijra and join the other emigrants, or *muhajireen*, was not just a decision: It was a sacred and liberating duty. Shaam (or Sham, as it's often written) referred to greater Syria, but also to so much more: It was not just a place, Mariyam learned, it was *the* place, and only the very best people – the true muhajireen – would gather in Shaam.

The most famous of the Western, English-speaking jihadis, and a rock star to homebound girls like Mariyam, was Abu Abdulrahman al-Britani, otherwise known as Ifthekar Jaman, a British 22-year-old of Bengali descent who migrated to Syria in 2013 from his home in working-class Portsmouth. Jaman was the first of a group of young men that dubbed themselves the Bangladeshi Bad Boys Brigade who decided to make hijra, and he was also the first one of them to die. But before he did, indeed before he'd even left England, he amassed a fairly large Twitter following, putting out what often seemed like an endless stream of photos and videos of himself answering questions about Islam and applying black kohl around his eyes, which made him look like Aladdin. He grew his beard long, in the manner of Osama bin Laden, who, he once said, struck him as “a really nice guy.” In his most famous video, he offered a 90-minute tutorial, full of digressions onto virtually every subject, on how to tie a turban.

Jaman, for those looking back now, offers an object lesson in what could have befallen the Khans, had they made it to Syria. Desperate to become a jihadi and motivated to help the suffering, he'd bought a one-way ticket to Turkey, finding his way to Aleppo, where, after being rejected by another rebel group for not having the appropriate contacts, he met an Algerian fighter from ISIS. “I hadn't even heard of them,” he told Shiraz Maher of the *New Statesman*, “but I checked them out and they were great.” Because of his good looks and his utter lack of military training, he was snatched up by ISIS's propaganda wing, if not to be an actual jihadi, then to play one on Twitter.

Before long, Jaman, with his hundreds of Twitter followers, became ISIS's most charismatic English-language salesman: taking selfies with his AK-47 (though he had never used it in combat) and promoting the chilled-out side of the caliphate, which he called “five-star jihad,” full of stolen war booty, or *ghaneema*, cuddly kittens and villas with swimming pools. A host of wannabe Ifthekar Jamans began to stream into Syria, and even more began to contemplate it. And he kept the encouragement coming. “The reason why I share so much is to show you how it is, the kittens, the landscape, etc, hoping to make you see

the beauty of it & come,” he wrote. True, the Western jihadis weren't of much use on the battlefield, having “no skills,” as he admitted. But even if ISIS didn't need them, he reminded his followers, “You need this.”

Mariyam had followed Jaman on Twitter even before he went to Syria, and she paid careful attention to his progress, as well as to his friends', who in a virtual context became her friends, too. “What are you waiting for?” these jihadis would write to the kids in the West. “Come to the land of honor. You are needed here.”

Jaman's sojourn in the land of honor ended abruptly on December 15th, 2013, when having finally been granted his

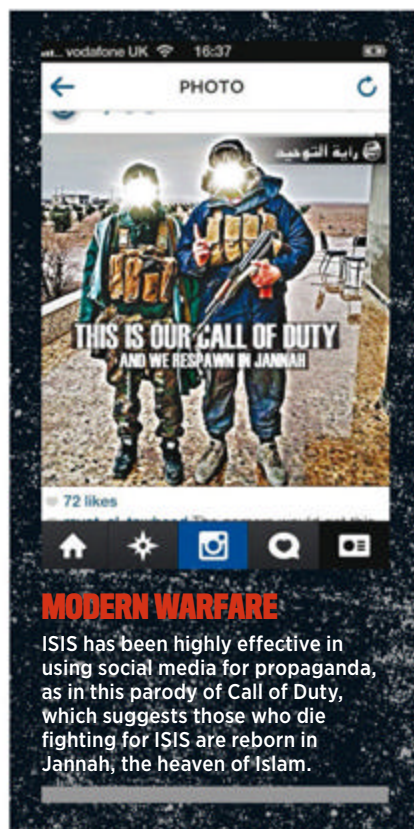
in fact, seemed to figure very little into anyone's thinking – but as beautiful green birds (or #greenbirds as it went on Twitter) that, according to some hadiths, would fly through the trees, eating from the fruits of paradise, and live in golden lamps hanging from a divine throne, before Allah returned their souls to them on the day of Resurrection.

That, among other reasons, was why all the martyrs died smiling.

This was the message making its way across social media, and there was even photographic proof of this phenomenon: dozens of pictures of newly dead young men, all wearing beatific smiles. Sometimes these photos were tweeted with captions noting how the smell of musk emanated from their bodies, or how their wounds continued to bleed for days, even weeks, after they had died. Martyrs' bodies, some said, didn't decompose. And there were more miracles in Syria: orchards sprouting endless quantities of fruit, mortar shells that, in ISIS-held territory, would fall and leave no damage. One jihadi wrote that, despite a lack of water and hygiene products, neither his clothes nor his hair nor his body ever smelled.

Many of these amazing tales were compiled in an e-book, *Miracles in Syria*, that told the story of the British jihadis during the early days of the war. A prominent figure in the book's narrative was Abu Qaqa, one of a group of young men from Manchester who, inspired by Jaman's stories, had come to Syria in September 2013. Ostensibly a gifted communicator with a feel for the deen, Qaqa – or whoever might have been using his account – maintained a presence on Twitter, Tumblr and Ask.fm. After injuring his leg in the same battle that claimed Jaman's life, he decided to build a brand of his own. By the spring of 2014, Abu Qaqa and another British jihadi, Abu Fariss, were ISIS's unofficial English-language scribes, reporting on the steady influx of pilgrims (“on average each month around 2-3 hundred and that's not including the women,” Qaqa noted), answering questions from would-be recruits – yes, Qaqa told one young man, it was possible to buy “quality hair products” in Syria – and generally serving as witnesses and cheerleaders for hijra, which they reminded all who wrote, was incumbent upon every Muslim, male and female.

Hamzah and Mariyam were both in private Kik communication with Abu Qaqa, their main contact in Syria. Mariyam also followed and exchanged tweets with another English-speaking jihadi, Abu Hud, otherwise known as “Paladin of Jihad.” Unlike Qaqa, a somewhat remote figure who presented hijra as a sacred obligation, Abu Hud came across as a friendly bro, who was shameless in trying to enlist Western akhis and ukhtis for what he promised would be the greatest experience of their lives. His astonishingly de-



wish to take part in an “operation,” he was killed during the first minutes of his very first battle.

On Twitter, Jaman's fans exploded in exhortations of joy, for the most part – for he had become a *shaheed*. Then, two months later, one of Jaman's newfound “brothers,” a Briton named Anil Khalil Raoufi, a.k.a. Abu Layth al Khorasani, was also killed. Mariyam by now felt a part of the group. “Inna lillah Wa Inna ilayhi Raji'oon” – To Allah we belong, and to Him we shall return – she tweeted. “Abu Layth has been martyred.”

But he wasn't really dead, Mariyam believed, because that is what she'd read and what Jaman and his friends reminded people constantly. Martyrs, unlike ordinary people, lived and breathed in Jannah, the highest plateau in heaven, not as young men with 72 virgins – this concept,

tailed Tumblr series, #DustyFeet, was almost a *Lonely Planet* guide to hijra, giving kids who might never have roughed it instructions about what kind of backpack or pocket knife to bring, how to get physically fit, even how to squat – the last of particular relevance, he noted, because the Prophet, who didn't have the luxury of "high-rise, 'European' sit-down flush toilets," had teachings on this particular biological need. Travel light, he advised, while also providing a comprehensive list of packing do's and don'ts – yes to warm socks, solar chargers and camelback water carriers, no to laptops, which could be "more incriminating than tablets and phones."

His followers, invited to "ask me anything," deluged him with questions, often using code words like "going on holiday" for their intention to come to Syria. "Is having glasses too much of a disadvantage," one asked, "or is it a must to do lasik?" (Abu Hud advised him to skip the surgery and "buy prescription goggles.") Another was curious if the medical marijuana he smoked for his chronic anxiety would be a problem. (Abu Hud, though not entirely sure, doubted ISIS's leadership would condone weed – though he offered to ask.)

A particularly skilled manipulator, Abu Hud always reminded his fellow brothers and sisters that he, most of all, needed to heed his own advice, while at the same time nudging them toward a decision to "get your feet dusty," a code for hijra. "You might be shedding tears thinking that you are sacrificing a great deal, but remember, your brothers and sisters are shedding blood," he said, and later quoting the Prophet: "Whoever dies in a state whereby he never participated in jihad, *nor did his soul ever desire this*, then he has died on one of the branches of hypocrisy."

Certainly, Mariyam's soul desired jihad, though she knew she'd never be allowed to fight. Her role, she understood, would be as a wife who would help raise the next generation of *mujahideen*. She'd be restricted in her movements – ISIS women do not leave their homes without a *mahram*, a male family member who acts as their guardian, or without permission from their husbands, in which case they travel in groups – but that wasn't so different from how she lived now. She never went anywhere alone. In fact, in some ways, life in a city like Raqqa might be better. She'd have a whole community of sisters, a group of ready-made friends, just waiting. And everyone,

it seemed – at least everyone she talked to – was under 25.

The recruitment of women into ISIS is particularly complex, says Humera Khan, executive director of Muflehun, a Washington, D.C.-based think tank specializing in preventing and countering violent extremism. "It's not that the women who are going there aren't smart," she says. "Some of them are extremely driven" – one ISIS wife is a doctor – "but somehow they're convinced that this life is a calling. Most of these women are expecting when they get to Syria that they will be able to live as

both detailed and practical, advising them to bring their own makeup and jewelry ("Trust me, there is absolutely nothing here"), as well as an abundance of clothes and shoes, which contradicted Abu Hud's advice. But Umm Layth was, after all, an *ukhti*. "There are clothes here, but Wallahi [I swear] the quality is really bad," she said. "It's a miracle if you find a top or trousers which last longer than a month.... The shoes here are also bad quality, in addition they only seem to have 3 sizes here."

Umm Layth also explained their living conditions: Once in Syria, they'd be given a house, though as there was a waiting list for homes, they might be temporarily relegated to the "sister's *makar*," or headquarters, while their husbands lived with the men. There was no housing for single women, she reminded them, emphasizing the necessity of marriage simply to exist in ISIS society. And there was no way a woman could take part in combative jihad, she added. But hijra wasn't just for fighting. In fact, their role was "even more important as women in Islam," for if there weren't women willing to "sacrifice all their desires and give up their families and lives in the West in order to make Hijrah and please Allah, then who will raise the next generation of Lions?"

These comments were written during the six months after Umm Layth first arrived in Syria, in November 2013. By September 2014, her missives had veered away from the practical to something more resembling fantasy. "There is something so pleasurable to know that

what you have has been taken from the Kuffar and handed to you personally by Allah...as a gift," she noted on her Tumblr, and then went on to list the war booty: refrigerators, ovens, microwaves, milkshake machines, "and most importantly a house with free electricity and water provided to you due to the Khilafah, and no rent included. Sounds great, right?"

It did, to Mariyam. And she became convinced that, just as Umm Layth said, "all those who have left their luxuries behind and made sincere hijra...will be taken care of." In fact, Umm Layth promised, whatever they had in the dar al-kufri, "[Allah] will replace it with something even better." It would be an amazing world of brothers and sisters, and she shouldn't have too many regrets, for as Umm Layth, using techniques common to all religious cults, reminded the girls that the family they'd get in ex-



NEXT-GENERATION JIHAD

ISIS has been indoctrinating children, recently producing a video of a young boy purportedly executing a prisoner. If they had made it to Syria, Hamzah and Tarek may have been forced to fight, while Mariyam would have been expected to marry. "They're going to be part of the generation that builds the caliphate brick by brick," says one expert on extremism.

the 'perfect Muslim woman' as described by ISIS, which is very clear on their expectation about women: They will be married early, they will be serving the fighters, they will be helping to establish the state. And these girls are fine with it. They're going to be part of the generation that builds the caliphate brick by brick."

This impression has been relentlessly promoted by a select number of highly influential female recruiters who, like Abu Qaqa or Abu Hud, write extensively online about how to make hijra to Syria. Mariyam followed several of these women and was particularly enamored of the writings of a 20-year-old Scottish woman named Aqsa Mahmood, who blogs under the handle Umm Layth. Umm Layth is believed to have been instrumental in helping a number of Western girls get to "the lands of Jihad," as she calls it, and her advice was

change for leaving their other family behind “are like the pearl in comparison to the shell you threw away into the foam of the sea which is the Ummah.”

Mariyam wasn't so worried about leaving her family – well, except her parents. Her brothers would come with her. As the oldest, Hamzah would likely be responsible for serving as his sister's guardian, and he would also quite possibly be responsible for selecting her husband. He was of two minds on all of this. On the one hand, as he wrote his parents, he was motivated “to take as much of my family to live in the land of Islam.” And yet he wavered, wondering if hijra was really necessary. Hamzah might be willing to swear allegiance to ISIS, but even as he'd applied for passports and visas, he seems to have had his doubts. Did he actually have to go to Syria, he asked a British advocate of jihad named Abu Baraa, or could he just pledge and stay at home? Abu Baraa (who does not admit to pledging allegiance to the Islamic State) assured him that hijra wasn't an absolute requirement, though, referencing the teachings of the Prophet, he added it was better to live a single day in obedience to the caliph than “to live and die in [ignorance].”

“I get questions like that from people all over the world,” Abu Baraa, who is 31, tells me from London recently, when we spoke on the phone. “Under certain conditions, living in an Islamic State is compulsory. For instance, if you're not able to express your own beliefs in opposition to the beliefs of the people you're living amongst, you're obligated to go somewhere else. If you can't fulfill your duties [as Muslims], if you are tempted to sin – all of these are circumstances where someone would be obliged. And for many Muslims living in America, one or all of these would apply to them.”

Abu Baraa is a former member of Al Muhajiroun (the Emigrants), a now-banned Islamist group led by the radical Anjem Choudary. Baraa has been arrested multiple times in England and is currently on bail on suspicion of supporting terrorism, resulting in his passport being rescinded by British authorities. Were that not the case, he too might have moved to the caliphate. Instead, as America prepared to begin airstrikes last summer, Abu Baraa reminded his YouTube followers that the world was divided into two camps. “Make sure you're on the side of the Muslims,” he said. “You shouldn't be on the side of the kuffar, nor should you be on the fence, neutral, saying, ‘This has nothing to do with me.’ You have to defend the Muslims.”

Hamzah decided he had to be on the side of the Muslims. “Me, living in com-

fort with my family while my other family are getting killed is plain selfish of me,” he'd later write to his family. “I want to be ruled by the shariah, the best law for all mankind.”

The Khans are a close-knit family, and leaving their parents was an agonizing thought. Umm Layth had an answer for this. “There is no way you can make this easier for your parents,” she wrote on her blog. “Your parents will be hurt, you will be judged and viewed by society and it will not matter an inch... The say of Allah is greater than that of all mankind put together.”

Day after day, wholly unknown to their parents, the Khans devoured steady streams of encouragement from the likes of Abu Qaqa, Abu Fariss, Umm Layth and their other new friends. “Don't tweet about *dawlah* [the Islamic nation state] or jihad; don't tell all your friends; don't tell your family,” advised Abu Fariss on his Ask.fm page. Be careful online, he said, but also be careful in real life: “Don't act suspicious.



“I SWEAR I WILL NOT GIVE THIS UP, EVEN IF THE ENTIRE WORLD TURNS AGAINST ME,” MARIYAM WROTE ABOUT HER BELIEFS.

Don't let your attitude change you because people will notice a change in you.”

And don't worry if you don't want to fight, a number of jihadists made clear, echoing Baghdadi's own June 2014 call to Muslims to help build the Islamic State. “There's a role for everybody,” one Canadian jihadist named Andre Poulin, a.k.a. Abu Muslim al-Canadi, was filmed saying in an ISIS recruitment video released in July, perhaps a year after Poulin was believed to have died in battle. “Mujahideen are regular people,” he said, who, if they couldn't fight, could give money, or assist in technology, or “use some other skills.” This message was also conveyed to a degree in a five-part Vice documentary on the Islamic State that Hamzah, who subscribed to the Vice News channel on YouTube, didn't like. “Man, I thought these Vice documentaries about IS will be good, but they suuuuuck,” he tweeted on August 8th.

Right up until he left for his hijrah, Hamzah seemed to be ambivalent about the brutality of the new caliphate. “ISIS's actions are just going to make our lives harder,” he wrote on September 2nd, 2014, the day the video showing the beheading of journalist Steven Sotloff was released. A month later, just two days before they were

scheduled to leave, he wrote, “Sometimes I wish I could just go to the desert to Mauritania, live under a sheik, study the Quran and be a shepherd, a simple life away from all this craziness.”

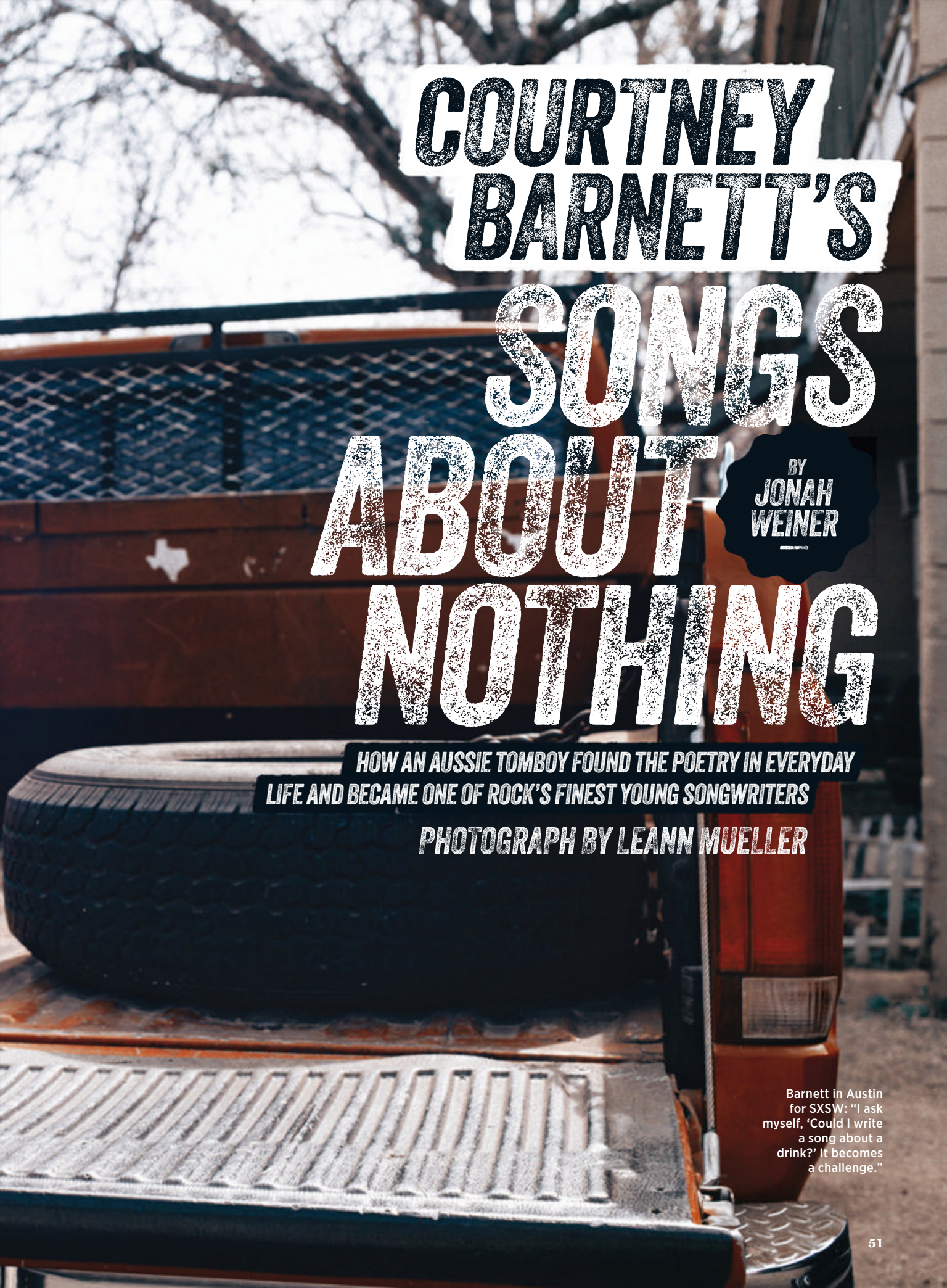
But for one reason or another – religious conviction, empathy, passion, naiveté, idealism, adventurism, maybe all of these – they decided to go. And so, just as Umm Layth and Abu Qaqa, and all the other muhajireen had advised, the Khan siblings quietly gathered their sleeping bags, some snacks and other gear, said nothing to their parents about their plans, and then the night before they left, sat down to write them letters.

Because of Mariyam's perfectionism, she wrote two. “I didn't realize how hard it is to leave your family, especially your parents and even more especially, your mother, behind,” she wrote in the most honest of the notes. “My heart is crying with the thought that I left you and that I will probably never see you again... I love you more than the world, I swear I do.”

ON JANUARY 13TH, 2015, about a week after the Charlie Hebdo attack in Paris, Hamzah Khan was formally arraigned at the Dirksen federal courthouse in Chicago, and pleaded not guilty to attempting to provide material support to ISIS. After the brief 10-minute hearing, the Khans' lawyer, Tom Durkin, introduced Hamzah's mother, Zarine, a tiny woman dressed in a dark coat and a paisley head scarf, her face uncovered in public for the first time in 20 years. “As parents, we feel compelled to speak out about the recent events in Paris, where we saw unspeakable acts of horror perpetrated by the recruiters for jihadist groups in the name of Islam,” she said shakily, and then denounced the violence as well as the “brainwashing and recruiting of children through the use of social media and the Internet.” She concluded with a message to ISIS leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi and his recruiters: “Leave our children alone!”

To say that the past few months have been a nightmare for the Khans would be an understatement. When I meet them for the first time, in the fall, at Durkin's office, they seem almost mystified by the recent events, as if someone had snuck into their home and stolen their children's brains. “We tried to raise them the best way we could: best education, best morals,” Zarine tells me as her husband, a quiet man, began to unload the contents of a large shopping bag on Durkin's conference table: Hamzah's science-fair medals, his trophy for memorizing the Quran, his first-place finish in the regional Muslim Interscholastic Tournament. They show me beautiful drawings of flowers that Mariyam made, and talk about Tarek's love for the Chicago Bulls. How had this happened? [Cont. on 64]





COURTNEY BARNETT'S SONGS ABOUT NOTHING

BY
**JONAH
WEINER**

**HOW AN AUSSIE TOMBOY FOUND THE POETRY IN EVERYDAY
LIFE AND BECAME ONE OF ROCK'S FINEST YOUNG SONGWRITERS**

PHOTOGRAPH BY LEANN MUELLER

Barnett in Austin for SXSW: "I ask myself, 'Could I write a song about a drink?' It becomes a challenge."

COURTNEY BARNETT IS SLOUCHED IN A SWIVEL chair, eating Cheetos for breakfast and bullshitting with her band about differing global connotations of the word “cunt.” “People react very strongly to ‘cunt’ in America,” the Australian-born indie rocker observes. “Yeah!” says her bassist, a wild-eyed dude with caveman hair who goes by the nickname Bones. “We were playing a show once, and I called our openers a bunch of sick cunts – that might have been a mistake. The crowd was like...” He falls into an awkward silence and throws around some offended sidelong looks.

Barnett chuckles. “‘Sick cunts’ means, like, ‘cool dudes’ in Australia,” she explains. It’s around 9 a.m. in Los Angeles, and she’s got on basically the same clothes she wore yesterday: black jeans with a dime-size hole below the left knee, battered Doc Martens and a grungy jean jacket she’s worn more or less constantly since Levi’s marketing reps gave it to her for free last year. (“I don’t have a lot of clothes,” Barnett says.) Pinned to the pocket is a button announcing her solidarity with the Friends of Leadbeater’s Possum, an endangered Australian marsupial. Bones brings up another story of onstage obscenity: the time someone in Philadelphia yelled out “Cocktopus!” for no clear reason, and Bones, seizing the moment, mimed himself jerking off an eight-pronged penis. Which he does again now. Barnett smiles, rolls her eyes and sleepily taps some fluorescent orange dust into her mouth.

This is the touring life of one of rock’s most beguiling young stars and deftest lyricists. Barnett, 27, is a master of small-bore observations that smudge the line between profundity and banality, set atop swaggering garage riffs. The geographies Barnett narrates in most songs are tiny – drinking wine with friends in a living room; regarding cracks in a plaster wall with the interpretive scrutiny of a palm reader; riding the Epping mass-transit line in Melbourne. And yet she somehow makes her world feel improbably big.

Contributing editor JONAH WEINER wrote January’s Nicki Minaj cover story.

Late in 2013, Barnett bundled her total recorded output – two EPs – into a full-length release called *The Double EP: A Sea of Split Peas*, which earned rave reviews, got her booked on *The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon* and landed her a Coachella slot. Barnett’s breakout hit, the video for which has 1.2 million YouTube views, was a psychedelic romp called “Avant Gardener,” which tells a true story of laziness and front-yard weed-ing that ends in a near-death experience: Hopes of growing radishes gave way to respiratory distress, a panic attack and an ambulance ride with EMTs. Barnett fills

the lyrics with deadpan humor, train-of-thought *Pulp Fiction* references and clusters of playful rhymes: “I’m breathing but I’m wheezing/Feel like I’m emphysemin/My throat feels like a funnel filled with Weet-Bix and kerosene.” Suspended within the song’s shaggy-dog haze, however, are deceptively dark themes of thwarted ambition and the paralyzing fear of wasting one’s life.

Right now, she’s in the control room of KCRW, a Santa Monica public-radio affiliate. The influential wake-up show *Morning Becomes Eclectic*

has invited her to take over its airwaves with several songs from her fantastic official debut album, *Sometimes I Sit and Think, and Sometimes I Just Sit*. “I feel delirious,” she says. Yesterday, she landed here from Sydney and was driven immediately to the studios where *Ellen* is taped, and where Michelle Obama was the marquee guest. “We got patted down – they searched all our bags,” says Barnett. “The

FBI ran background checks on us. It was pretty wild.”

Barnett narrates this in a pleasant daze – she’s as sedate as Bones is rambunctious, which she acknowledges makes her an unlikely frontwoman: “My ideal job would have been packing boxes in a fucking basement for the post office, or stacking supermarket shelves at midnight.” But she has a sales-closing charisma that she can turn on when she chooses. In her early twenties, she worked hawking Adidas and Nikes at a Melbourne shoe store. “I was pretty good at doing the bullshitting salespeople can do,” she says. “I’d do it based on the person. If they were rude and obviously rich, I’d tell them what they wanted to hear. But if it was someone really nice, talking about their weekend plans and being a normal human being, I’d be like, ‘Don’t spend \$300 on fucking shoes. They’re going to fall apart anyway.’”

A producer indicates that it’s time to play. In the recording room, Barnett joins Bones and her drummer, Dave Mudie, tuning her guitar with nine effects pedals arranged at her feet. As she plays, she closes her eyes or casts them downward, periodically smushing her lips into the microphone so that it appears to be supporting her entire weight.

On *Sometimes I Sit and Think*, one of the challenges Barnett gave herself was to write about the world beyond her skull – narrating greater cataclysms than gardening mishaps. On a loping track called “Dead Fox,” she connects roadkill to animal rights to industrial farming to contemporary capitalist alienation. As she plays it now, Barnett smiles occasionally at microscopic flubs: gently botched strums or missed notes that sound fully of a piece with her winningly ramshackle aesthetic, and which cut against her lyrics’ underlying sense of gloom and anger.

“What’s so funny?” asks the host.

Barnett glances around, grinning nervously. “Everything’s funny,” she says.

IN AUSTRALIA, BARNETT shares a home with her girlfriend of four years, the singer-songwriter Jen Cloher. The pair’s romantic partnership doubles as a creative one: Barnett and Cloher run a small label called Milk! Records that Barnett founded in her bedroom, and in addition to the label, Barnett has played alongside Cloher as a guitarist and duettist. Well after Barnett’s career took off, she still held on to her job tending bar at Northcote Social Club, a local spot where she and her friends perform a lot – she finally let it go, albeit with the reluctance of someone who knows the misery of being broke and is all too afraid that it might happen again.

Barnett was born in Pittwater, a seaside area an hour from Sydney, the daugh-

“MY IDEAL JOB WOULD BE PACKING BOXES IN A BASEMENT FOR THE POST OFFICE.... IT FEELS LIKE A BIG JOKE I PULLED ON EVERYONE.”

ter of a former ballerina mom and a graphic-designer dad. "It was a surfy area, but we lived out of town, in the bush – a one-story house with big trees everywhere," she says. "Me and my brother would ride bikes, play basketball, computer games, play commandos in the bush." She danced ballet, played tennis and started playing guitar as a tween, influenced, to varying degrees, by Hendrix, Cobain and "Smoke on the Water." "I remember writing a song when I was 12 or something, called 'You' – it was talking about eyes and hair, exactly what you'd imagine a love song to be. I liked boys and had boyfriends, but those kinds of feelings were just what I'd read about. It wasn't really me." In high school, Barnett says, "I was the kid who played guitar and read lots of books." The year before she graduated, she got together with her first girlfriend. "We were secretive about it because of high school and being afraid of what people would think. When the other kids found out, they were kind of weird at first, but I feel pretty lucky because I was accepted. There are people in the world who get killed for that stuff." When it came to telling her parents, "I didn't for, like, a year, and when I finally did, because I broke up with my girlfriend, I was really scared. And they were like, 'Yeah, we know!'"

Barnett's desire to wring resonance from the seemingly mundane was already in place at the University of Tasmania, where she first wanted to be a fine-art photographer ("I was attracted to Nan Goldin realism: images of people doing their thing"). But after two unsatisfying years, she dropped out, deciding to focus on music-making, and decamped to Melbourne. Barnett says she has suffered from clinical depression, and around this time her condition was at its worst. She took antidepressants. What things made her unhappy? "They're never real reasons," she says. "Just, you know, general kind of esteem and stuff. I don't want to go on about it, but I basically wouldn't leave my room,

and I was unemployed for quite a while, and it became a cycle of, um, one leading into the other. I just couldn't see the point in anything – that's what it always came back to."

She talks about her brain as if it were a machine she can't turn off, for better or worse. She recalls trying to meditate not long ago, on the encouragement of Cloher. "I got so angry and frustrated from it, be-



Barnett onstage in London in December

cause I couldn't stop thinking, and you're supposed to clear your head of thoughts."

What Barnett learned to do, with time, was accept, rather than suppress, the overthinking part of herself: filling journals with ruminations and drawings, then mining those pages for material, shaping her sprawling entries into her slightly less sprawling verses, then setting them to guitar. "Part of the point of songwriting for me is that I can work through ideas and issues and emotions – clarify them and make them better," she says. "With depression, it's so easy to divert it or take drugs to alleviate it. I think it's important to actually feel the pain."

AFTER THE PERFORMANCE, Barnett, Bones and Mudie drive to an art gallery in an industrial corner of downtown L.A. The gallery's front room is lined with pen-and-ink drawings of chairs that Barnett made while trying to figure out the cover art for *Sometimes I Sit and Think*. The chairs were "a literal representation of the album title," she says, "but also a childhood memory. My dad was always collecting vintage chairs and shit, intending to do them up, but he'd have a bunch of them hanging around the house at any given moment, not doing anything." One room over, roadies are setting up a carpeted stage where, tonight, Barnett will play a show for 200 or so fans, friends, and VIPs like Moby. "It comes out of our promo budget," she says of the show. "I figured this would be a lot cooler than buying some ads for the subway."

There's time to kill before sound-check, so we walk to a nearby bar beneath a concrete overpass, where we order micheladas. She talks about how overjoyed she was when "Avant Gardener," which has nothing resembling a traditional chorus, took off the way it did. "It feels like this big joke I pulled on everyone," she says. She often approaches writing a song as a specific exercise. She points at her beer: "I ask myself, 'Could I write a song about this drink?' It becomes a challenge."

We have a couple of rounds, then walk back toward the gallery. When we come to an intersection, Barnett looks the wrong way and nearly gets creamed by a pickup truck accelerating from our left. She laughs and regains her train of thought as we enter the gallery. The drawings are a motley, misshapen assortment of chairs that evoke the artist David Shrigley, with brief captions (CHAIR THAT NEEDS NEW CUSHION). "I liked the idea of being surrounded by all these shapes and structures," she says. "All this broken, beautiful stuff."

PLAYLIST

INFLUENCES: FIVE SONGS THAT COURTNEY LOVES

"IN BLOOM"

NIRVANA

Nevermind was the first album I bought; I was maybe seven when I heard this. I'd never heard full-on cool guitar music, and it suddenly opened up to me.

"UP ON THE SUN"

MEAT PUPPETS

After getting into Nirvana, we discovered bands that influenced them, like the Meat Puppets. This song was really different, long and jammy and weird.

"EVERYBODY HURTS"

R.E.M.

I learned this when I was beginning to play guitar, and it was so good for that – beautiful and emotive, and easy to play. I was superexcited.

"SHAKE YER DIX"

PEACHES

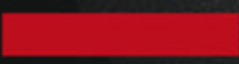
She's the coolest. Me and a friend would put this on before we went out to parties when we were 18, just being stupid and having fun and screaming.

"TAKE FIVE"

DAVE BRUBECK

I grew up listening to my dad's music – he and I would put this one on real loud and dance around the house. So that was pretty cute. I love this song.

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Kendrick Lamar's Rap Revolution



Compton MC's latest LP is a masterpiece of fiery outrage, deep jazz and ruthless self-critique



Kendrick Lamar

To Pimp a Butterfly

TDE/Aftermath/Interscope

★★★★½

BY GREG TATE

Hashtag this one *Portrait of the Artist as a Manchild in the Land of Broken Promises*. Thanks to D'Angelo's *Black Messiah* and Kendrick Lamar's *To Pimp a Butterfly*, 2015 will be remembered as the year radical black politics and for-real black music resurged in tandem to converge on the nation's pop mainstream. Malcolm X said our African ancestors didn't land on Plymouth Rock, Plymouth Rock landed on us. The cover of Lamar's second major-label LP flips that maxim with a fantasia of bare-chested young hoodrocks flashing cash and bottles on the White House grounds, Amerikkka's Most Unwanted victoriously swarming a toppled symbol of pale-skinned patriarchy.

The party begins with George Clinton's blessings and bassist Thundercat's love for Bootsy Collins. "Wesley's Theory" is a disarming goof that's also a lament for the innocence lost to all winners of the game show known as *Hip-Hop Idol*. "Gather your wind, take a deep look inside," Clinton says. "Are you really who they idolize?" Lamar's got jokes and jeremiads for himself, us *and* those malevolent powers that be: "I want you to recognize that I'm a proud monkey," he raps later. "You vandalized my percep-

tion, but you can't take style from me."

He's also made hell a room for live jazz improv, from the celestial keys of Robert Glasper, to the horns of Terrace Martin and Kamasi Washington, to Thundercat's low end. Black Musicians Matter majorly here – their well-tempered orchestral note-worrying a head nod toward Sun Ra, which producers including Flying Lotus and Sounwave smush into a lush volcanic riverbed of harmonic cunning and complexity. Only a lyricist of Lamar's skills, scope, poetics and polemics would dare hop aboard it and dragon-glide.

If we're talking insurgent content, Lamar straight-up owns rap relevancy on *Butterfly*. He relishes and crushes the gift he's been handed by the national constabulary's now-weekly-reported racist tactics: "It's a new gang in town, from Compton to Congress.../Ain't nothing new but a flow of new Demo-Crips and Re-Blood-licans." But his own fears of assuming a messiah position are upfront and personal. You can imagine Chuck D or Dead Prez going in as hard and witty against white supremacy as Lamar does on "The Blacker the Berry" and "King Kunta." But you can't picture them exposing the vulnerability, doubt and self-loathing swag heard on "Complexion," "u," "For Sale?" and "i." What makes Lamar's bully pulpit more akin to Curtis Mayfield's or Gil Scott-Heron's than any protest MC before him is the heart worn on his hoodie's sleeves.

To *Pimp a Butterfly* is a densely packed, dizzying rush of unfiltered rage and unapologetic romanticism, true-crime confessionals, come-to-Jesus sidebars, blunted-swing sophistication, scathing self-critique and rap-quotable riot acts. Roll over, Beethoven, tell Thomas Jefferson and Bull Connor the news: Kendrick Lamar and his jazzy guerrilla hands just mob-deeped the new Jim Crow, then stomped a mud hole out that ass.

LISTEN NOW!
Hear key tracks from these albums at
RollingStone.com/albums.



Beachcomber:
Wilson

Brian Wilson Looks Back, With Friends

The Beach Boys genius invites Kacey Musgraves, Nate Ruess and more on a joyfully nostalgic trip

Brian Wilson *No Pier Pressure* Capitol ★★



It's been a late-game rally for Brian Wilson, the eternal teenager who, by his own measure, just wasn't made for this world. After three more-or-less lost decades in the wake of *Pet Sounds*, few expected 2004's *Brian Wilson Presents Smile* – and even fewer 2012's intermitently great Beach Boys reunion LP, *That's Why God Made the Radio*, with Wilson's wistful joy back at the helm. His latest solo LP began as songs for the Beach Boys' follow-up, but when the group ran aground once more, Wilson called in a quirky mixtape's worth of young collaborators, and it became something else: the sound of a famously cloistered artist finally leaving his room.

The highlights aren't mere vocal cameos but writing collaborations. "Guess You Had to Be There," a wry comment on Sixties nostalgia (and a melodically delicious celebration of it), was penned with country It girl Kacey Musgraves; fun's Nate Ruess tightropes between cliché and pop timelessness on "Saturday Night." There are a few too many retreads (the "Sloop John B"-ish "Sail Away"), but it adds up to Wilson's most forward-looking solo LP, *Smile* notwithstanding. "Don't be sad," he sings on the elegiac closer, "The Last Song." "There was a time and place for what we had." What a time it was. But there's no time like now. **WILL HERMES**

KEY TRACK:
"Guess You Had to Be There"



Sufjan Stevens

Carrie & Lowell Asthmatic Kitty

★★★★

A family loss sends Stevens back to his heartbreaking folk roots

The 2012 passing of Sufjan Stevens' estranged mother, Carrie, sparked an existential crisis in the 39-year-old singer-songwriter. Here, on his most emotionally draining album, he joins Nick Drake and Elliott Smith in the canon of artists who channel suicidal thoughts into impossibly pretty songs. Stevens strips his sound far enough to reveal his deepest anguish; neither the Disney-style orchestras of 2005's *Illinois* nor the synth-pop-as-craft-project of 2010's *The Age of Adz* peek through his acoustic fingerpicking and warm-milk voice. Even when Stevens goes all happy memories and gentle melodies on the title track and "Eugene," you'll be holding back tears. **JILLIAN MAPES**



Nellie McKay

My Weekly Reader 429

★★★★½

Renegade pop classicist goes back to the Sixties, finds 2015

"I cannot believe I still have to protest this shit," spits Nellie McKay in "Murder in My Heart for the Judge," a Moby Grape jam smartly reanimated for the Ferguson era. A renegade songwriter with an ultraflexible Great American Songbook sensibility, McKay finds modern resonances everywhere in this inspired covers set: The fiscal crash clouds the Kinks' "Sunny Afternoon"; the schools crisis haunts Frank Zappa's "Hungry Freaks, Daddy." McKay mostly plays these straight, letting her musical smarts add the context. See the Crosby, Stills and Nash/Jefferson Airplane tune "Wooden Ships," colored with marimba and delivered with Sinatra-like precision – an apocalyptic sci-fi hash dream that still rings true. **WILL HERMES**

A Fierce, Bright Folkie Goes Electric

Laura Marling's fifth LP builds upward with sharp wordplay, vivid emotions, rich blend of sounds

Laura Marling *Short Movie* Ribbon ★★½



"I'm just a horse with no name," sings Laura Marling on "Warrior" – slyly invoking the 1970s soft-rock hit by America while conjuring a wanderer on an English moor, and teasing a "horse"/"whore" play on words while telling her errant knight to please dismount. It's a flash of lyrical left hooks on a set where the British singer-songwriter goes all Judas, like Dylan before her, recording with electric guitar and broadening her palette without sacrificing her subtly badass folkie persona.

As on the striking lead sequence of 2013's *Once I Was an Eagle*, Marling plays with repeated motifs. The central riff of "False Hope," a plugged-in panic attack inspired by a New York City blackout, resurfaces in the soulful "Don't Let Me Bring You Down," which echoes the Pretenders and rhymes a flipped Neil Young title with the barked inquiry "Do I look like I'm fucking around?" (No, ma'am.) Marling's acoustic-guitar work is more impressive than ever: See "Easy," a fingerpicked folk reverie suggesting a stoned Joshua Tree journey, and "I Feel Your Love," a breathless lover's plea that evokes Nick Drake in its river imagery and shadowy string section. "Gurdjieff's Daugh-

KEY TRACKS:
"Warrior," "I Feel Your Love"



Movie star: Marling

ter" mixes Smiths-flavored folk rock with Valley-girl lilts, evidence of the singer's recent time in California. "Strange" is a talking blues that's more Lou Reed than Woody Guthrie; ditto the title track, with its Velvet Underground-ish drones and galloping finale. "It's a short fucking movie, man," Marling sings with venom, clearly aiming to make the most of hers.

WILL HERMES



Pops Staples

Don't Lose This Anti- ★★½

Final songs by an R&B patriarch, produced by Jeff Tweedy

This deep set by the great R&B-gospel mediator Roebuck "Pops" Staples is a rare example of a posthumous reclamation that feels stronger than the original might've been. Working with unfinished 1999 tracks (originally intended for a lost Staple Singers album), producer Jeff Tweedy isolated voices and Pops' quicksilver guitar – like his singing here, an object lesson in tender power – using minimal additions. The result is bracing, timeless gospel blues, sung with his daughters (the soldier's eulogy "The Lady's Letter") and solo (a chilling read of Blind Willie Johnson's "Nobody's Fault but Mine"). Along with the new reissue of 1965's *Freedom Highway*, it's a worthy tribute to a gentle giant of American music. **WILL HERMES**



Ludacris

Ludaversal DTP/Def Jam ★★

The Atlanta rap wild man hits middle age, stays potent

Ludacris has been focused more on acting in blockbuster movies than on making music in recent years. But on his first album since 2010, he's still the same elastically flowing shout-rap dirty bird – gleefully wilding out on Southern party jams like "Get Lit" and "Beast Mode." At 37, Luda also indulges in some dad-rap introspect: "I used to be out partying every damn night/Now sometimes I'd rather be with my kids," he notes on "Grass Is Always Greener." There's a somber R&B R.I.P. for his alcoholic father ("Ocean Skies," featuring Monica), and bonus track "Problems" explores celebrity isolation in ways that make Eminem sound like a greeter at Applebee's. Maybe he should've called this album *Crunk on the Tracks*. **JON DOLAN**



Ringo Starr

Postcards From Paradise UME ★★½

Ringo's still smiling after five decades of rock & roll life

It's been more than 50 years since Ringo Starr declared himself a fan of Beethoven – "especially his poems." But all that time, he's reigned as one of rock & roll's most beloved sages. *Postcards From Paradise*, his 18th solo effort, is a masterful summary of Ringo-ness: his cheer, his cheek, his wisdom. He gets a little help from old friends like Joe Walsh and Todd Rundgren – no Kanye or Rihanna on this track list – and builds the title tune out of Beatles quips: "It's like I said the night before/I'll love you when I'm 64." Best of all is "Rory and the Hurricanes," celebrating his pre-Beatles band – the one that made Ringo a star in Liverpool when the other three Fabs were nobodies. **ROB SHEFFIELD**



Action Bronson

Mr. Wonderful Vice/Atlantic ★★½

Queens rap star makes a luxuriously weird major-label LP

Action Bronson is so New York that four years into a successful rap career, he still imagines luxury as a subway ride through Queens. "Tell the pilot land the plane/On Roosevelt and Main/Put a jacuzzi on the 7 train and lay," he commands on "Easy Rider." Bronson's tight referential bars have earned plenty of Ghostface Killah comparisons, but his first major-label LP has a film-noir cool all his own. On the album's strongest tracks ("Terry," "The Rising"), he sounds like he's rapping from the corner table at a smoky social club, assuring us that no indulgence is rich enough to satisfy him, no femme fatale enough to hold him down. "I'll marry a ho," he claims, "only if the bitch looks like Mary Monroe." **NICK MURRAY**



Twin Shadow

Eclipse Warner Bros.

★★★

Moody synth-pop prince lets loose, but not for long

There's a single moment on New Wave revivalist George Lewis Jr.'s third album as Twin Shadow where he throws off his leather coat to get lost in pure ecstasy. It comes on "Old Love/New Love," a house-beat-driven highlight that offers rave-level bliss on an album that more often sticks to cocksure swagger ("To the Top," "When the Lights Turn Out") or somber introspection ("Turn Me Up"). Of those two modes, the more muscular approach nearly always suits Lewis' strengths better; his contemplative moments, like "Alone," tend to get drowned out by pompous synths and howled pleas. At its best, though, *Eclipse* is an album that's self-assured and unrestrained. **DAVID TURNER**



Lady Lamb

After Mom + Pop

★★★½

A young songwriter whose dreams are worth retelling

As Lady Lamb, 25-year-old Maine native Aly Spaltro spins heavy psychedelic tales that blur the borders between reality, dream and nightmare. "Dear Arkansas Daughter" compares heartbreak to sinking to the bottom of the ocean floor over gloomy, Crazy Horse-style guitar chug. On the dark prayer "Spat Out Spit," Spaltro wonders, "Will I awake to find that I'm deep in the woods and I'm snarling on all fours?" "Ten" is a whirlwind diary about spending time in Arizona as a child, driving through the Vermont snow with her best friend long ago and more. She waits till the last line to reveal the common thread: "There's a sweetness in us that lives long past the dust on our eyes once our eyes finally close." **PATRICK DOYLE**



Van-tastic!
Morrison

A Duets Album Only One Man Could Make

Van Morrison unearths lost classics with all-star friends from Mavis Staples to Steve Winwood

Van Morrison *Duets: Re-Working the Catalogue*

RCA ★★★½



The duets album is often a stroke session that involves a minimum of thought – but not for Van Morrison. *Duets* is as cantankerous and eccentric as any of the man's other projects. Rather than just bring in a few glossy names to decorate his greatest hits, he digs up deep cuts from mostly overlooked albums. (You won't find anything from *Moondance* or *Astral Weeks* here.) And his partners range from grizzled vets – Steve Winwood, Mavis Staples, Taj Mahal – to surprise guests like Natalie Cole, Mark Knopfler and Michael Bublé. Even if the artists probably figured they were signing on for "Into the Mystic" or "Tupelo Honey" karaoke, they rise to the Van challenge, helping him rescue songs that only die-hards know.

He opens *Duets* with the late Bobby Womack on a searing "Some Peace of Mind," from the 1991 album *Hymns to the Silence*, and Staples sounds raw and weathered on 1970's "Lord, If I Ever Needed Someone." Knopfler's voice and guitar seem right at home in "Irish Heartbeat," just as George Benson's smooth-jazz touch lifts "Higher Than the World." But the surreal highlight comes when Van teams up with Mick Hucknall – that's right, the dude from Simply Red. He torches up the poetic Celt ramble "Streets of Arklow," from the unjustly forgotten 1974 cult classic *Veedon Fleece*. It's a gem that only could have been imagined by a crank of Morrison's brilliance. That's what makes *Duets* more than a tribute to the obscure corners of his songbook or his undimmed growl – it's a tribute to his pugnacity. **ROB SHEFFIELD**

KEY TRACK:
"Some Peace
of Mind"



Parquet Courts

Live at Third Man Records

Third Man

★★★½

Brooklyn rockers rip through a ferocious concert album

Like many great art punks before them, Parquet Courts have a latent guitar-jam gene – one reason this revisitation of songs from 2014's *Sunbathing Animal* isn't superfluous. Another is raw power. Check the rave-up in "Bodies," three minutes of six-string pleasure bombs made sweatier, sparkier, gutsier. Even better is the set-capping run of "Instant Disassembly" into "Raw Milk" and "Into the Garden" – a 19-minute equivalent of the Dead's "Dark Star"/"St. Stephen" medley for panic-attack-prone millennials. The Parquet guys end the show on *Sunbathing's* hardcore-ish title track, just to remind us they ain't no damn hippies. **WILL HERMES**



The Prodigy

The Day Is My Enemy

Three Six Zero/Warner Bros.

★★★

EDM survivors take a sharp left turn into punky, bratty noise

Do veteran electronic gnashers the Prodigy dare to drop an album in the Skrillex era? With their usual arsenal of Nirvana-esque riffs all but ineffective in a post-dubstep world, the resilient crew instead swerves hard into digital hardcore noise on their sixth album. They ignore modern EDM conventions almost completely (save a track with "Bass Cannon" gunner Flux Pavilion), opting instead for a high-velocity chug that recalls their style circa 1992, combined with the punky, jagged attack of recent M.I.A. Unlike their funky, rap-informed late-Nineties peak, *The Day Is My Enemy* can be obnoxious and same-y after a while – but what good punk isn't? **CHRISTOPHER R. WEINGARTEN**



Near-Death experience: Jason McGerr, Gibbard, Nick Harmer (from left)

Death Cab Rise Up From the Ashes

Ben Gibbard processes a pair of losses with bracing honesty, emotional tunes

Death Cab for Cutie *Kintsugi* Atlantic

★★★★½



Kintsugi is Death Cab for Cutie's survival record. In the years since the indie-rock heroes put out 2011's comparatively buoyant *Codes and Keys*, frontman Ben Gibbard went

through a public divorce from actress-singer Zooey Deschanel, and founding guitarist and producer Chris Walla began to move out of the band's orbit. Those breakups resound in nearly every corner of the sparsely textured, emotionally prostrate album, starting with its first song, "No Room in Frame," where Gibbard sings with crystal-clear heartache, "I guess it's not a failure we could help/And we'll both go on to get lonely with someone else."

Gibbard's signature way of sounding affected by life's disappointments without letting them wreck him comes in handy here. On the down-tempo "Black Sun," he sings about finding hope; on the New Wave-y "Everything's a Ceiling," he's still longing for someone who's moved on to a new relationship, but it comes across as more resigned than desperate. Throughout, Gibbard's bandmates (including Walla, who left shortly after the LP's recording) swell around him with tasteful textures that echo their work on 2001's early peak, *The Photo Album*, teasing climaxes that never quite materialize in a way that leaves you wanting more. Death Cab have coped with their losses collectively, and emerged with a heart-wrenchingly honest record.

KEY TRACK:
"No Room in Frame"

KORY GROW



Darius Rucker

Southern Style Capitol Nashville

★★★

Hootie who? Reborn rock star is the chilliest dude in Nashville

In his hugely successful second act as a country singer, the artist formerly known as Hootie has proved he's as solidly likable as any dude in Nashville. On his fourth solo country album, Rucker is warm and easygoing, more buddy than bro, winningly carrying bar-hopping honky-tonk ("Good for a Good Time"), down-home anthems ("Half Full Dixie Cup") and low-sung ballads ("You Can Have Charleston"). Of course, as the biggest African-American country artist in decades, he also brings a mildly utopian cast to songs like the endearing "Southern Style," about a good ol' girl who loves Lil Wayne and Lynyrd Skynyrd and "keeps her tan lines in the winter." You can't front on that. **JON DOLAN**



Emile Haynie

We Fall Interscope

★★★½

Lana Del Rey producer makes an expensive-sounding breakup LP

Producer and songwriter Emile Haynie has lent his expansive, high-drama sound to albums by Kanye West, Lana Del Rey, Eminem and fun., among others. On his solo debut, he pulls together a roster of A-list friends (Del Rey, Nate Ruess, Rufus Wainwright, Lykke Li) and idols (Brian Wilson, Randy Newman) for a breakup-themed LP that merges slow-mo hip-hop beats and orchestral pop into something that aspires to be a 21st-century *Pet Sounds*. The ornate tracks are as wow-worthy as the guest list—so it's surprising how same-y the mood of wallowing grandeur can get. Newman's mean, sunny "Who to Blame" is a fine exception on an album that too often feels like beautifully turned filler. **JON DOLAN**

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Comedy as Heavy Lifting

Ferrell and Hart work hard and long to turn dick jokes into an art form. Epic fail

By Peter Travers

Get Hard

Will Ferrell, Kevin Hart

Directed by Etan Cohen

★½

TEAM UP WILL FERRELL AND Kevin Hart for the first time in anything and it's got to be funny, right? You'd think. But *Get Hard*, with Ferrell as James King, a hedge-fund manager railroaded into prison for fraud, and Hart as Darnell Lewis, a car washer James hires to prep him for 10 years in San Quentin, commits the cardinal sin of comedy: It lets us see the sweat, the backbreaking effort of trying to breathe life into a farce based on racial and gay stereotyping. These two comic wizards huff and puff to keep the laughs airborne. But there's no helium in this balloon. It's one joke stretched beyond endurance. The joke being that James thinks Darnell has done time because he's black, but Darnell is really a straight-ass family man with no record. Burn.

Which brings us to the dick gags. *Get Hard* takes a swing at getting doughy James in physical shape to act gangsta behind bars. But the DOA script, which first-time director Etan Cohen co-wrote with Jay Martel and Ian Roberts, revels most in gay panic. James must learn to suck cock. In a toilet stall, James contorts his mouth to make contact with the penis of a stranger (Matt Walsh of *Veep*). No go. James finds it easier keister-ing, which means shoving objects – a gun, a shiv – up his ever-expanding anus. These are the laughs, folks. Cohen, who shared credit on the script for the excellent *Tropic Thunder*, can't seem to get a rhythm going – scenes drag out or end abruptly. It's not easy hanging talents like Ferrell and Hart out to dry. But *Get Hard* gets the job done. It's one limp noodle.



TWO JOKERS
Ferrell bench-presses the comic stylings of Hart.

While We're Young

Ben Stiller, Naomi Watts

Directed by Noah Baumbach

★★★

COMEDY REALLY IS HARD. SO it's a kick when a filmmaker gets it right, as Noah Baumbach does in this stingingly funny take on aging. *While We're Young*, which finds humor in the broken places, reunites Baumbach with his *Greenberg* star Ben Stiller. Stiller's Josh Srebnick isn't the total asshole this time. But Josh is just as neurotic. He's a documentarian who's been fiddling for a decade on his latest work. His wife, Cornelia (Naomi Watts), inadvertently put Josh in the shadow of docu master Leslie Breitbart (Charles Grodin). He's her dad.

But the real threat in the mind of fortysomething Josh is youth, expressed in a quote from Henrik Ibsen's *The Master Builder* that opens the film. Josh and Cornelia feel alienat-

ed from their age-appropriate, kid-focused BFFs, played by Maria Dizzia and Adam Horovitz. Cornelia and Josh have adjusted to being childless.

What to do? Fraternize with twentysomethings in the persons of Jamie (Adam Driver),

a wanna-be filmmaker who kisses Josh's ass at every opportunity, and his wife, Darby (Amanda Seyfried), who takes Cornelia to hip-hop dance classes. Baumbach scores many a caustic laugh at the expense of watching Josh and Cornelia

Sean Penn Gets Harder

The Gunman Sean Penn, Javier Bardem, Idris Elba

Directed by Pierre Morel ★

No knock on Sean Penn for aping Liam Neeson and going all Action Jackson on us. At 54, Penn looks ripped and ready. As a producer, he hired *Taken* director Pierre Morel, found great actors (Javier Bardem, Idris Elba), co-wrote the script about Jim Terrier, an ex-mercenary atoning for past sins in the Congo, and – oh, why go on? *The Gunman* degenerates into dreary setups for guns and gore. Penn merits more. So do we.



Penn shoots to kill.

try to recapture their youth. But compassion also seeps through the cracks. Stiller is killer at blending wit with physical comedy. His scenes with the gifted Driver, playing a careerist in hipster's clothing, escalate into generational comic warfare of a high order. Though Baumbach lets his themes run off course as the film progresses, he sure as hell touches a raw nerve.

Insurgent

Shailene Woodley,
Theo James

Directed by Robert Schwentke

★★★

IMPROVEMENT, HOWEVER slight, can be detected as *Divergent* morphs into *Insurgent* onscreen. There's less exposition, more action and a discernible spark in the acting that was missing before. But let's face it, the trilogy of young-adult novels that Veronica Roth cooked up to rival *The Hunger Games* never lose the stale odor of also-ran. *The Divergent Series*, to be completed by carving two films out of *Allegiant*, the third novel, isn't being goosed by inspiration – try box-office gold.

It's too bad. Shailene Woodley, who never gives less than her all, again plays Tris Prior, the film's Joan of Arc. Tris is a divergent, meaning she doesn't fit the molds set up by Jeanine (Kate Winslet), who rules the dystopian futuristic society that is a walled-in Chicago. You know Jeanine's the boss because she's the only one in skyscraper heels.

As *Insurgent* begins, Tris foment rebellion in the company of Tobias Eaton (Theo James), a fellow divergent who goes by the name of Four because he fears only four things, sequels not among them. James, a solid actor, mostly glowered in the first movie. Here he busts loose, shows his vulnerability and runs afoul of a new enemy, Evelyn (Naomi Watts), the mother who abandoned him as a child.

Yikes. Don't want spoilers for those not among the 32 million who bought the novels. It seems odd that a movie that celebrates divergence would conform so rigidly to formula.

There's a new director, Robert Schwentke, in for Neil Burger, and a whole new army of screenwriters, but everyone's still connecting the dots. The film peaks with a series of tests for Tris that play like a gamer's fantasy of virtual reality. Surprise is lacking. Ditto humor, though Miles Teller (*Whiplash*), as a thorn in Four's side, gets in a few fun licks by not staying on the film's draggy tempo. Otherwise, *Insurgent* stubbornly fails to surge.

er and debuting director Dan Fogelman sticks to the facts. A playful screen credit reads, "Kind of based on a true story a little bit."

My guess is you'll be having too much fun to care. Fogelman, whose scripts range from *Crazy Stupid Love* to *Last Vegas*, is hardly allergic to formula or sentimentality. The Lennon letter changes Danny. He vows to quit touring and write the kind of music he thinks Lennon would have



(1) James, Teller and Woodley fight it out in *Insurgent*. (2) Pacino pulls out all the stops as a rock star in *Danny Collins*. (3) Lawrence and Cooper find disaster in *Serena*.



Danny Collins

Al Pacino, Annette Bening

Directed by Dan Fogelman

★★★

AL PACINO IS THE LIFE OF the party as Danny Collins, an aging rock icon still making bank from oldies concerts. But Danny is sick of it. His manager (a priceless Christopher Plummer) unwittingly kills the golden goose when he gives Danny a gift. It's an undelivered 1971 letter to Danny from John Lennon, in which the former Beatle invited Danny to discuss career choices. The film's catalyst is a real letter Lennon sent to British musician Steve Tilston, who worried about the corrupting influence of fame. The letter is as far as screenwrit-

encouraged. So Danny flies to New Jersey, checks into a Hilton to work and seeks out the home of Tom Donnelly (Bobby Cannavale), the son Danny had after a one-night stand with a groupie, now deceased. Tom, a suburban family man, wants nothing to do with his neglectful Big Daddy. But when Danny visits Tom's home and meets his wife, Samantha (Jennifer Garner), and their ADHD-afflicted daughter, Hope (Giselle Eisenberg), can reconciliation be far away?

Danny Collins has no intention of breaking new ground. The flirtation Danny carries on with hotel manager Mary Sinclair (Annette Bening) is pure boilerplate. But here's the thing. Pacino and a top

cast make it mean something. Cannavale digs deep into the role of the resentful son, revealing scar tissue not easily healed. I wish Fogelman didn't introduce the crutch of terminal illness. Watching fine actors add complexity to their roles is joy enough. And Pacino is irresistible. Whether strutting onstage or wrestling with his drug-fueled demons, he doesn't skimp on Danny's human limits. With nine Lennon tunes on the soundtrack and a new song for Danny to express his creative reinvention, this hilarious and heartfelt movie is an exuberant gift.

Serena

Bradley Cooper,
Jennifer Lawrence

Directed by Susanne Bier

★

SO YOU THINK JENNIFER Lawrence and Bradley Cooper are invincible onscreen? Ha! *Serena* is damning evidence to the contrary. Lawrence shot this folly between two David O. Russell films, her Oscar-crowned *Silver Linings Playbook* and *American Hustle*, both with Cooper. They will survive. Audiences forced to endure the 109 coma-inducing minutes of *Serena* should bring an e-book or a soft pillow.

What led the actors astray? Ron Rash's 2008 novel won raves. And director Susanne Bier guided the Danish film *In a Better World* to a foreign-language Oscar in 2011. Maybe the script, by Christopher Kyle, would play better in Danish, since Lawrence and Cooper nearly choke on their dialogue.

He plays George Pemberton, a Depression-era logging tycoon who brings his bride, Serena (Lawrence), home to North Carolina to watch him make his fortune. Serena doesn't watch. She's a doer. Rachel (Ana Ularu), the townie who spewed out George's bastard kid, is screwed, especially when Serena miscarries. Serena's descent into madness and murder sparks a storm of overacting that makes the Macbeths look like introverts and reduces this misbegotten lumber-world tragedy to splinters. Left for dead since 2012, *Serena* would better serve its stars by burial, not resurrection.

[Cont. from 39] Starr." Ringo gives his nose a blow into a hankie and then bounds onto the stage in black jeans, a sparkly black T-shirt and a black colonial-cut jacket. He sits behind the drums and breaks into "Matchbox," a Carl Perkins song the Beatles and Ringo have been singing for a half-century: "Let me be your little dog, till your big dog comes/ When the big dog gets here, show him what this little puppy done."

The crowd hollers. Ringo flashes the first of dozens of peace-and-love signs. He hits the notes on his 1971 song "It Don't Come Easy." The room's serotonin drops somewhat to make room for an overlong Lukather solo on "Rosanna" and the Mr. Mister guy singing "Kyrie." But Ringo keeps smiling and making eye contact with the audience. He rips into "Boys," a Beatles cover of a Shirelles song originally written from a girl's point of view, but one Ringo has been pulling off for 50 years. Finally, he moves back out front and sings "Photograph" and eyeballs a dancing couple: "He's gazing into your eyes, and you have your hands in his pockets!" He closes by playing "With a Little Help From My Friends." A woman rushes the stage, and Ringo fake-kisses her rings and loses his place in the song but quickly recovers. There's dancing in the aisles, and Ringo exits for a moment before returning for two choruses of "Give Peace a Chance."

THE LAST CHORD IS STILL RINGING, but Ringo is already gone. Back in the day, this is when the cognac or something else would flow. Now Ringo, in his own words, blathers as the stage adrenaline still pumps through his veins. There's talk of how he once wrote a song in 48 minutes with Richard Marx, his love of coconuts and his Sunday diet-cheat day, when Ringo eats a bowl of oatmeal, has one croissant and drinks a cup of coffee.

"The mind is always waiting for Sunday," says Ringo. "Three days from now! I'm getting known now as Broccoli Boy."

It's not all for vanity's sake. Besides tuberculosis, he dealt with peritonitis and three bouts of pleurisy. But Ringo puts a happy face even on sickness. It was while he was being treated for TB that a nurse wheeled around a cart with various musical instruments. "They gave me the drum, and then I wouldn't be in the band unless I got a drum," says Ringo. "I was not going to play the triangle or the tambourine. I'd shout, 'Give me the drum!' I knew immediately: 'I want to play drums. I don't want to play piano, I don't want to play guitar.'"

The conversation meanders to the fact that Ringo is scaling back his life. He recently sold his place in Monte Carlo and an estate in England where his family has

gathered at Christmastime for decades. That leads to talk of when Ringo and Barbara moved into their current Beverly Hills home in 1997. Ringo popped open a long-forgotten trunk, and there was his *Sgt. Pepper* outfit. "I put the *Pepper* suit on," he says, "and it still fit! George found his and wore it in a video. But he had to let it out, which is funny because he was always the skinny one."

Ringo starts thinking of George, the Beatle he saw most in the post-1970 years. Ringo played on multiple tracks on Harrison's landmark *All Things Must Pass*, not that either of them remembered. "He called when he was remastering and asked if I remember what songs I play on," Ringo says. "I said I had no idea. He called me back after doing some research and said, 'You played on most of them, you bastard!' I said, 'Well, you didn't remember either.'"

The SUV is dark, and even though Ringo is sitting next to me, I can't really see him. When Harrison was near death in 2001, Ringo went to visit him in a Swiss

"Some of us made it to the other side," he says in a rare somber moment. "Some of us didn't. Who knows why?"

hospital. He apologized that he couldn't stay long because he had to fly to America, where his daughter Lee was having surgery for a brain tumor. (She fully recovered.) Next to me, there's a little sob.

"I'm crying now," says Ringo. "That was one of the most beautiful things. He couldn't move, he was riddled with cancer, laying down. And I said, 'Look, I've got to leave. I've got to go to Boston to be with Lee.' And he said, 'Do you want me to come with you?'"

Ringo would have done the same. He waded through the crowds outside the Dakota to visit Yoko Ono the day after his friend John was shot, a subject that 34 years later, he still finds extremely painful to talk about. I ask him if he thinks about John and George a lot: "Not every day, mostly when someone brings them up. But they're always in here with me."

The death of Lennon put an end to all the Beatles reunion-madness talk that included a 1973 offer to play a one-off show for millions with a man wrestling a shark as an opening act. Ringo thinks if things had worked out differently, the band might have played again. One of the reasons, according to Ringo, that the Beatles stopped touring was they couldn't hear each other

among the screaming girls. Modern technology would have changed that.

"I think it would have been possible," says Ringo. "With the stuff you have now, I think we could have got it together. I think the stumbling block was just sitting around and saying, 'OK, let's do it.' And we never got to that. You know, we did in twos, we talked about it. But I think if we had just relaxed behind it long enough, we still had the songs, and we still could play. We could have put it together. And we could have done 'A Day in the Life.'" Ringo sighs. "Of course, it's ended now. John and George are gone."

Fearing things are getting too melancholy, Ringo switches the conversation to the upcoming Hall of Fame festivities. He says he's going to play, but not that long. "I mean, that Springsteen show! Bruce was great, but it was long. When he played in L.A. in the 1970s, I'd have Max Weinberg call me at halftime, and then I'd get in the limo."

The ride ends, and Ringo steps out of the SUV, looking just as fresh as when the day began. He says goodbye quickly. Something is waiting for him. Ringo Starr has an appointment with two scoops of coconut ice cream.

THE NEXT MORNING, RINGO IS IN his top-floor suite, dressed in black. The television is turned to CNBC with the sound off. We're supposed to talk on the balcony, but it's windy. "You might do OK, but I might get blown off," he jokes.

We listen to a few songs from *Postcards From Paradise*, including the nostalgic title track. Ringo knows his past will always be present in his present. Sometimes he fights it, but he knows deep down being the drummer in the greatest band isn't a hardship; the weight is actually a gift.

He talks about his love affair with America and how he tried to immigrate to Houston based solely on his love for bluesman Lightnin' Hopkins. That was when he was 19, and the paperwork went nowhere. But just four years later, he was walking down the steps of a 707 in New York with John, Paul and George and into the embrace of what would become his adopted homeland. "You want to know my high point?" Ringo asks. "Walking down those stairs. It changed everything."

We bump elbows a last time and he says goodbye. But it isn't the last time I see him. That afternoon, I wander down to the beach and see a dozen or so tourists gawking and talking into cellphones. I move closer and see a small man. He holds a camera in his hand and is being chased by a taller man with a camera. It's Ringo at a photo shoot. He darts one way and then another, his shoes hitting the waves, an ancient sprite wearing out a rival generation younger than him.

At this moment, it's not hard to believe Richard Starkey will live forever. 

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THE CHILDREN OF ISIS

[Cont. from 49] Had they seen a change in behavior? Noticed them becoming more secretive? More fervent? Had they seen any changes in their kids?

Other than spending more time alone on the computer, “No,” they answer.

In fact, Zarine says, she was barely aware of ISIS prior to the fall of 2014. Its lure – for her and her husband, and for the majority of Muslim parents just like them – took them completely by surprise. It shouldn’t have, notes Dr. Yasir Qadhi, a well-known Muslim cleric in the United States and a professor at Rhodes College in Memphis. “Unfortunately, the type of Islam that most parents are comfortable with is a quieter Islam that tends to shy away from controversial matters, such as American foreign policy in Muslim lands,” he says. This fundamental breakdown in communication, combined with technological advances that many parents find hard to keep up with, has created an almost unbridgeable gap between the generations. “One of the biggest misunderstandings is that radicalization occurs in the mosques, in the open,” Qadhi says. “Radicalization occurs online, in secret. We want these kids to bring their grievances out in the open. But in the absence of genuine dialogue that could be tempered with some elderly wisdom, young men and women, frustrated at what they perceive as the increasing injustices of our foreign policy, gravitate to clerics with more black-and-white views on Islam and the West. There is a real narrative out there that the West is at war with Islam, and now, there’s this romantic, utopian naïveté about the caliphate – and these kids are naïve.” Qadhi questions whether “criminalizing naïveté” is the right way to deal with kids like the Khans. “Like it or not, when kids find out that their peers are getting 15 years for what looks a lot like a thought crime, it makes them more secretive because it reinforces the idea that the government is out to get them.”

As of now, Hamzah Khan faces a choice. He could change his plea to guilty and receive perhaps a shorter sentence, or he could stay true to his idea of hijra and try his luck in court. Either way, he will likely spend time in prison as, even his lawyer admits, no one has won a lasting acquittal in a terrorism-related case since 9/11.

A FEW NIGHTS AFTER HAMZAH’S arraignment, I visit the Khans at their home in Bolingbrook. Shafi, a soft-spoken man dressed in simple blue trousers and a long tunic, answers the door and shows me into the sitting room, where Zarine, hair shrouded in a black-and-white hijab, has set a coffee table with a plate of fried chicken, potato chips, a carton of orange juice and a few cups. Shafi, who worked for years as an event planner for

Islamic charities, lost his job not long ago, apparently over his children’s case, and since then the family has been struggling to get by. Neighbors and friends, while supportive, says Zarine, keep their distance. “They’re scared – like, if these good kids could be brainwashed, we don’t know what’s going to happen to our children.”

The room feels lived in but also welcoming and kid-friendly: worn couches marked with crayon stains, a small plastic tricycle, Fisher-Price toys and picture books. A heavy bookcase is lined with Islamic texts as well as schoolbooks belonging to the older children: English, economics, biology. Tucked in the corner of the bottom shelf is a tiny – and new – TV.

An ethereal-looking girl, Mariyam sits on the couch wearing a flowing purple leopard-print *shalwar kameez*, the pajama-type pant-and-tunic outfit that is worn by men and women in South Asia. Mariyam loves purple (as well as leopards) and speaks in the softest of voices, telling me about a few of the other things she used to love: movies, ice-skating, shopping – all things she replaced with reli-

“These girls are intended as sexual prizes,” says Mariyam’s lawyer. “They have no idea what they are getting into.”

gion, which still seems to consume most of her thoughts. “I can sit in a corner and just read and read about it, and I can just study it, day in, day out,” she says.

Unlike her brother, Mariyam has not yet been charged with a crime, as is also true for her little brother, but she likely will be, says her lawyer, Marlo Cadeddu, who keeps close watch on her client to make sure she doesn’t veer off into talk about the case. Though the government might argue that providing one’s body to a terrorist group can be considered “material support,” Cadeddu challenges this idea, arguing that ISIS recruits in much the same way that online sexual predators groom their victims. “They tell them that nobody else understands them and that they’ll be appreciated and loved by the Islamic State, which is classic grooming,” she says. “These girls are intended as wives – as sexual prizes, pure and simple. They have no idea what they’re getting into.”

In the hope that the government will not recommend prison time if Mariyam is charged, Cadeddu has been working for months to integrate her client back into

the human, rather than virtual, world. This includes insisting Mariyam get her GED, which she has so far passed with honors, and attend regular counseling sessions with a Muslim female psychologist. In January, she began community college, hoping to work toward a degree in early-childhood education. Mariyam is also taking art classes and volunteering at a local Muslim relief organization. Perhaps most important, Cadeddu, with backing from a number of psychologists, has insisted that Mariyam meet with a Chicago-based Islamic scholar who has challenged her reading of the Quran and ISIS’s interpretation of Islam. Recently, she began speaking with a family acquaintance who has done relief work in Syria and who explained, in grotesque detail, the realities on the ground. After all of this, “I’ve been able to look at things from different points of view,” Mariyam tells me. “It’s really opened my mind.”

All of this sounds good, and maybe a bit too good. On February 26th, the FBI raided the Khans’ house for a second time, leaving with boxes of “communications devices” likely belonging to Mariyam and her younger brother. Though the bureau didn’t comment on what it was looking for, a quick search for Mariyam’s former Twitter handle, @deathisvnear, turns up a comment on Ask.fm to a well-known Somali-American jihadi asking if he knew Umm Bara, her online alter ego. The anonymous post was made at least three months ago, before Cadeddu began her deradicalization effort, but after the kids were stopped at O’Hare.

After more than a year of indoctrination, it would be surprising if a teen like Mariyam didn’t have lingering questions, and loyalties. “Even in the best-case scenario, it might take a while,” says Muflehun’s Humera Khan. She believes that long-term intervention and rehabilitation, with both the kids and their parents, is necessary. “Getting into it wasn’t an overnight process. It’s not a quick process to get them out of it, either. But it has to happen. If you just send them to prison, that will only harden their views.”

There has been extraordinary silence from the local Islamic community about Hamzah Khan and his siblings. Virtually the only friend of the Khans who agreed to speak with me was Mohammad Chaudhry, who has known the family for four or five years. “There is a lot of fear,” Chaudhry, who is originally from Pakistan, concedes over coffee at a Bolingbrook McDonald’s. “America is good, that’s why we’re here. This is our home. And yet, they stop us at the airport, they make us feel like we did wrong.” A heavily bearded man in a knitted skullcap, he takes a sip of his coffee. “These are American kids,” he says. Though ostensibly speaking about the Khans and their treatment by the criminal-justice system, he could just as well be

referring to any one of the would-be muhajireen, who, from their bedrooms in cities throughout the United States, were unsuspecting targets, seduced by the magical land of Shaam, and now, as Americans, face the consequences.

BECAUSE OF THE NATURE OF THE Khan case, which is considered an ongoing investigation, the government has presented no information about how the teens were first identified and tracked, though in arguing their determination to commit "violent jihad," they cited tweets, Internet searches and even, in Hamzah's case, some of his doodles, including one drawing of the ISIS flag. Dr. Marc Sageman, a psychiatrist and national-security expert, has consulted on more than a dozen of these types of cases, and notes that from the government's perspective, "the idea is whatever is on your hard drive is also in your mind, which, when you're talking about teenagers, is fundamentally unreliable." Given the context, which in many cases revolves around a government informant posing as someone else online, perhaps even someone that teenagers might think they know, the consequences can be severe. "These cases have nothing to do with a 'terrorist narrative,'" Sageman says. "They're about identity. And everyone sees the world through the prism

of who you are. These kids identify as Muslims. And what they see are young Muslims in the tens of thousands being killed in Syria by barrel bombs – and the Western press doesn't report this. We report on the killers. They see the victims. We're talking about two different perspectives, and dialogue is almost impossible."

Not surprisingly, the Justice Department has a very different take on these cases. "It is our responsibility to stop people from going over to join ISIL," says a senior DOJ official. "How can you say that any of these individuals who were stopped wouldn't be the next Jihadi John? And how could you live with yourself if you could have stopped them and didn't? Anyone who tried to join ISIS in the last 18 months knows exactly what kind of organization they were joining."

When she was detained at O'Hare, Mariyam endured questioning over the course of eight hours. As illustrated in a draft transcript of Mariyam's FBI interview admitted at Hamzah's detention hearing, the interrogation underscored ISIS's powerful conditioning as well as Mariyam's own unwavering belief. All her shyness faded in the face of the FBI, whose questions she repeatedly refused to answer.

"Why would you talk to these people? They're monsters," one of the agents said.

"I'm not," she replied.

"But they're cutting off people's heads!" the agent said a bit later.

"Yeah, why do you think they're doing that?" she asked.

And little by little, Mariyam laid out her grievances: that the U.S. and its allies were killing innocent children in places like Syria or Afghanistan; that it seemed unfair that these acts were excused, when crimes by Muslims – who in her mind were defending themselves – were denounced. "You're loyal to your country no matter what, even if it does bad things," she said.

"This isn't a discussion about me and my country," one of them replied. "It's about you." And Mariyam, he said at one point, was turning this into an interrogation – of them.

"You're interrogating me!" she said.

Oh, no, they assured her. A real interrogation would be much worse. "People would be screaming really loudly, throwing stuff around. It would be...scary."

"Yeah, that's what you do to some people," she told them.

"We're not here to do that to you."

"You still do it to people.... There's so many stories about it."

"OK," the agent finally admitted. "Yes, that goes on. I agree with you."

"Yeah, you will probably do that to me," she said. "If not now, then you will in the future."

65

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The Dawn of Letterman



David Letterman had been hosting *Late Night* for just four months when he appeared on his first ROLLING STONE cover, but the DNA of his show was already there: remote segments with local business owners, cracks at the expense of his network bosses, and absurdist bits like “Stupid Pet Tricks.” Some critics were skeptical (the *Los Angeles Times* sniffed that the show “did not jell”), but it was already a success with viewers, outdoing previous host Tom Snyder’s show by 30 percent in the ratings. ★ ROLLING STONE writer Lewis Grossberger approached Letterman cautiously: “I’d heard Dave hated the media and doing interviews, so I was a bit apprehensive.” The two hit it off, though, as Letterman

talked about his uneven career before *Late Night*, particularly his ill-fated daytime talk show. (“Every day, I felt like I was in Vietnam,” he said.) For extra color, Grossberger hung around the *Late Night* offices at 30 Rock, looking on as writers pored over “the official newspaper of the pasta industry, on the chance that something amusing may have happened in fettuccine that month.” Head writer Merrill Markoe, Letterman’s then-girlfriend, leafed through a phone book as she was interviewed. “I find stuff in here that you just can’t imagine would exist,” she told him, tearing out an ad that promised to “make anyone a dancer in three hours” for a skit that would later involve an unsuspecting audience member. “All I could think while I was reporting,” says Grossberger, “was how much I wanted to be a writer on his show.”

On the Charts

- 1 **Ebony and Ivory**
Paul McCartney with Stevie Wonder, Columbia
- 2 **Don't Talk to Strangers**
Rick Springfield, RCA
- 3 **Don't You Want Me**
The Human League, A&M/Virgin
- 4 **The Other Woman**
Ray Parker Jr., Arista
- 5 **Always on My Mind**
Willie Nelson, Columbia

In the Issue

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